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OR, CHOWDER JOHNNY'S SNAG-STRIKE.

BY JO PIERCE,
AUTHOR OF "BASEMENT BERT," "FIFTH
AVENUE FRED," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A LOST BAG OF GOLD.

THE sound of a revolver-shot echoed through the Kinglike Hotel. Reddy Rusher, the bell-boy, threw up his head with a start.

"Hi!" he cried, excitedly, "some o' them terrors have murdered each other, sure pop!"

Reddy was a trifle incoherent, but preci-

"ROBBED!" ECHOED THE COOK. "YES, CLEANED OUT OF TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS!"
THE BELL-BOY GRIMACED.

sion was not to be expected at such a crisis. He had been traversing the hall with a happy-go-lucky air, but his lassitude was all gone now. He rushed up the second and last flight of stairs with nimble feet.

As he progressed he had ample subject on which to found his suspicion of foul play, though somebody seemed to be still very much alive. Vociferous yells sounded ahead of him, but whether of pain or fear he did not decide.

"Crickey!" he added, "I'll bet et's that hayseedy chap who has Number 97. His lungs seemed pretty good fer yellin', I remember."

The door of the room from which the sounds proceeded was closed; but Reddy did not let that stop him. He flung himself against it, and, as it was not locked, it flew open quickly. He then had view of the whole scene, but he saw only one man, a tall, lank person, who was literally dancing with excitement or something else.

Reddy was quite as much excited. His eyes gleamed, and he looked around everywhere. Then he turned a reproachful gaze upon the man.

"Say, Ulster County, where's the corpse?" he demanded.

"Help, help!" cried the man.

"W'ot fer, Uncle Sam?"

"I am lost, lost!"

"Never mind; we will find ye ef et takes a whole 'lectric battery ter do et. Where's the dead man?"

"What dead man?"

"Ain't nobody killed?"

"Not as I know of."

"Then you are a base deceiver!" cried Reddy. "Here I hev my mouth all made up ter see a murdered man, an' you go an' spile the whole lay-out. Say, Uncle Sam, go an' kill somebody, will ye, jest ter git inter the game?"

"My name is not Uncle Sam. I am Israel Robbins, of Ulster county—"

"Yes, I know that. Was you hollerin' ter the folks at home, jest now? Did they hear ye?"

"Boy, I am robbed!" exclaimed Robbins.

"W'ot of?"

"A bag of gold!"

"Now you talk biz, an' sorter git a gait on. Who did it?"

"I only know I am robbed—"

Israel and Reddy were not advancing as fast as was to be hoped for, but, just then, the night clerk and the porter and the chambermaid rushed to the scene, quite as much alarmed as Reddy had been by the late ringing shouts.

The Kinglike Hotel stood on the Bowery, and was not a place which rivaled the Fifth Avenue in magnificence and kindred good things, but it was not a resort of known law-breakers, and its proprietor tried to make it quiet and respectable. The night clerk was now in charge, and the first words he heard dumfounded him.

"Robbed!" he echoed. "What's that?"

"Just what I want to know," answered Israel, rushing around the room.

"He's got 'em!" suggested Reddy.

"My gold, my gold!" moaned Robbins.

"Guess you swallered et, by accident," commented Reddy, with a skeptical smile.

"Tell me all about this," directed the clerk. "We want this mystery solved."

"So do I, by gum!" exclaimed Israel. "Have I slaved all these years, keepin' city boarders every summer in Ulster county, only ter be robbed now? Oh, oh!"

He threw up his chin and pulled frantically at his hair, and the bell-boy shook his head.

"He's got a knocker-out drink, fer sure, or else et's the ginoine jim-james has got him."

The clerk was a business man, and he returned to business. Israel Robbins was a guest of the house, and, though he was a

"hayseed" person, as Reddy had declared, they were bound to protect him. The clerk asked for an explanation, and received it.

"What time is it? Just twelve, eh? Wal, I went ter bed before nine—I always do that—and I slept good until I was aroused by somebody prowlin' in my room. I was scared for I had the bag of gold, and up I got. I was too late; I didn't ketch the thief; I didn't see him, an' I didn't hear him. He must have slipped out powerful careful while I was risin'. But he went—he did, an' he took my money with him. Ten thousand dollars all in gold, and put up in a pretty bag with a blue ribbon to it, by gum!"

"Slipped out careful, did he?" inquired Reddy. "Then when did that revolver shot come in?"

"Wal, I took a shot at him as I woke up."

"Then it seems we have a thief in the hotel!" exclaimed the clerk.

"Or else this gent dreamed all this!" added Reddy, doubtfully.

"Dreamed it? Would a dream have stole my gold?" demanded Robbins.

"Maybe you only dreamed you had a watch," suggested the boy.

"Now, Reddy, you dry up!" ordered the clerk.

He did not speak very harshly. Reddy was the son of Washington Rush, the proprietor of the hotel, and a privileged character. His role of bell-boy was purely a fiction on his part, though he did fill that position for the fun of the thing when he felt like it. The hotel was not of the aristocratic sort and the guests usually had to wait on themselves. Now and then Reddy waited on them, and he proudly called himself "Bell-boy 4-11-44."

Israel was not to be pacified, and the only thing was an investigation. The clerk looked very serious.

"I suppose you want the police in?" he slowly suggested.

"No, I don't!" declared Israel, quickly. "I don't have no faith in them fellers; they are frauds."

The clerk seemed very much relieved, and so he was. Whatever his own opinion of the police, he did not like to advertise the hotel as a place where a robbery had taken place.

"How much money did you say you had?" he pursued.

"Ten thousand dollars, all in gold," replied Israel.

"Many people don't have so much gold coin as that."

"It wasn't in coin; it was dust—gold-dust right from the diggings, an' ten thousand dollars' worth of it."

"Did you dig it in Ulster county?" asked Reddy, suspiciously.

"It was brought from Australia by John Robbins, my cousin."

"Ah! another of our guests?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"In his room, I suppose. He had one near here."

"Number 108," added the bell-boy.

"Go and call him, Reddy," requested the clerk.

The boy went, but soon returned with the announcement:

"He ain't there; his room is empty."

"What?" cried Israel. "Jack gone? Say, by gum! maybe it was him who stole the gold!"

"You say he brought it from the diggings—"

"Yes, but I bought it an' paid cash for it—ten thousand dollars, by gum!"

"As I remember your cousin, he did not look like a thief. Wasn't he a bluff, solid-looking man in sailor clothes?"

"Yes; that's him. He was a sailor—Hearty Jack Robbins, they call him. He

left his ship in Australia, set out for the diggings, struck it rich an' got this gold. Now, now—oh! it is all gone, an' I am ruined, ruined!"

Israel began to tear about the room wildly again, and the clerk had to take him in hand and quiet him. The investigation was proceeded with. Eunice Jones, the chambermaid, was again summoned and questioned, but she declared she had not even heard the sounds made by Israel, having been in another part of the hotel. She had seen no robbers, or anything that looked like robbers.

The clerk said nothing on what now seemed to him the most important point of all, and one which worried him. If the thief had gone out by the street door, he had undoubtedly seized the chance when the clerk deserted the office to see what was the matter with Israel. It would not do to suggest this, so the clerk kept still.

A search amounted to nothing; the bag of gold remained unfound.

Mr. Robbins finally quieted down, and was left in his room by the others, who wended their way toward the office.

"I wonder he don't demand the presence of the police," remarked Eunice, the chambermaid.

"He don't know enough," replied the clerk.

"I don't believe he ever had a bag of gold," snapped Reddy.

"Yes, he did," answered Eunice. "I saw it, for he had it in his lap when I went in to make the bed. He took out a handful of the little lumps and showed it to me. Oh! he had it, fast enough."

Reddy immediately manifested fresh interest. He was not favorably impressed with Israel, and had been inclined to doubt all he said. But now that it was proved the gold had been there, matters seemed very different to the sharp-witted lad.

"Ten thousand in gold dust!" he muttered. "Crickey! that's a pile of the stuff! Wouldn't I like ter hev seen et? Say Briggsey, I hereby apply fer a posh as chambermaid, so I kin see all the gold that our country jays bring in."

"I don't understand this robbery," murmured Briggs, soberly.

"Where is the boy?" inquired Eunice.

"What boy?"

"Why, the one he had with him, to be sure."

"He was alone; there was no boy with him," answered the clerk.

"Indeed there was a boy with him!" stoutly persisted the maid. "This very evening I heard him and the boy talking for a long time, in that room."

"Reddy, were you in there?" demanded the clerk.

"Not by a long shot!" No 4-11-44 in that royal chamber!"

"Very strange that if any boy was with him I did not see him enter or leave."

"There was a boy with him until an hour ago," reassured Eunice.

"Where is he now? Did he rob the old man? Why didn't Robbins mention him? This is queer!" muttered Briggs.

CHAPTER II.

REDDY TURNS DETECTIVE.

"We will see about this!"

So spoke the clerk, and he turned and went back to Israel's room. He found the old man still up.

"Say," began Briggs, abruptly, "where's that boy?"

"The sassy brat who was with you?"

"No, the one you had with you, this evening."

"The one I— Why," replied Robbins, looking very innocent, "I ain't had no boy with me."

"No boy in this room?"

"No, sir! What d'ye mean, say?"

"Mean? Why, that a boy was in this very room and you talked with him a whole hour—that's what I mean!"

"Who says all that stuff, say?"

"The chambermaid."

"Say, there will have to be a new likker law passed next meeting o' the Assembly. Ef chambermaids have got ter swillin' likker so they hear things that ain't so, it's time ter call a halt on the demon, drink. It is, by gum! There wa'n't no boy here; I ain't seen no boy; there ain't been nobody with me; that's a dead-sure fact, Mister Clerk."

Briggs could say no more. He did not want to call the lodger hard names, or anger him, lest he should see fit to call in the police. Silenced, but not convinced, he let the matter rest, for the present.

Israel suddenly reached for his hat.

"I'm goin' out," he announced. "It seems likely ter me that the thief will spend some o' that money right near here. He was prob'ly hard up, an' he will want ter make a raise, quick. I will go an' see ef I kin trace or trap him."

He continued preparations, but Briggs did not wait for him. The clerk went out with a dissatisfied expression.

"I don't understand this," he muttered. "Eunice isn't the person to make mistakes, commonly, and I don't believe she has, now. Has this Ulster county greenhorn lied to me? If he has, maybe he lied about the loss of money, too. By Jupiter! if I catch him lying a theft onto this hotel when there ain't no cause for it, I will just break him all to pieces! I'll smash him!"

This was strong language, but Mr. Briggs felt it was justifiable. When he reached the office he found Eunice and Reddy still there.

He explained the situation, and Eunice, too, waxed indignant.

"He calls me a liar, does he? Now, he can't do that; I will just face him and—"

"Gently, Eunice! Don't get excited. Nobody doubts your veracity. May it not be that you were mistaken—"

"Not much! I say the boy was there, and I will swear to it."

"That Uncle Sam is a gallus chap," put in Reddy.

"I doubt him, myself. Now, he is going out to investigate on his own hook, he says; he'll soon be down here."

"Say, Briggsy!" exclaimed Reddy, "there is something in this. He has got somethin' in his head, he has. You just hold yer hosses an' let me go out, too. I'll just shadow old Ulster, an' mebbe get a point or two on this blind game."

"It's late, Reddy."

"Yes, an' you had better set down in the office an' take a nap, Briggsy. Late hours is bad fer the human carkiss. Hi! I hear old Ulster's number fourteens on the stairs. So long!"

With this Reddy slipped out of the door.

"Queer lad!" commented Briggs. "He will make or break, one of these days."

"No wonder people have mutilated his surname of Rush, and call him Reddy, the Rusher," added Eunice.

Unconscious of these comments, the boy had gone well beyond the outer door and waited for his man. When Robbins came out Reddy had to smile, for the lodger wore a long coat, which made his tall form look even taller, and on his head was a rusty silk hat with a new mourning band around it, while in his hand was a big cane. This was his usual attire, but he labored under the impression that he was dressed as well as any of the rich men of New York; out of date in every respect though he was.

He started off down the Bowery.

"Now, to shadow old long-legs!" murmured Reddy.

Two blocks were passed.

"Say, he is out ter find his lost money; he is!" added the follower, with fine scorn.

"Goes as if he was invited to a weddin' an' had got late. Don't never look at nobody or nothin'. That is the way ter find lost money. Oh, yes!"

Mr. Robbins certainly did not have the air of a thief-seeker, and Reddy was sharp enough to see it. He did more—he followed where the man from Ulster county went, and did it with skill and a manner of innocent abstraction which would have served him well if anybody had taken more than a casual look at him.

He was not long kept in idle pursuit, for, suddenly, Robbins paused in his walk and almost literally pounced upon another man. The latter had been walking along in blissful ignorance of Israel's proximity. He was a comparatively young man, and a full-fledged sport, if appearances went for anything.

He had an immaculate suit of light colored clothes, wore a hat as tall as Israel's, but fully in style, and had a buttonhole bouquet of vivid hue. On the Bowery he no doubt passed as a blood of first class, though Fifth avenue would not have put such a verdict upon him.

He fitted the Bowery; he would not have fitted Fifth avenue.

Israel held him fast, and Reddy noticed that the older man immediately began to talk like a race-horse.

"They know each other!" decided the bell boy amateur. "Well, it is a gallus acquaintance fer my man from Grasstown."

The sport stood still and listened.

"Robby pounced on him in an excited way, an' I'll be shot ef he ain't got Mr. Sport worked up, too. They both look as ef they was scared about something. That's queer, with two such moral gents!"

Reddy's mind ran actively, and his curiosity kept pace with it. When the men turned briskly, with the evident intention of going somewhere on important business, 4-11-44 was not slow to follow again. The course was along a side street.

"Hi! but ain't Ulster a good judge o' men an' things! He has picked out jest the gent who can help him git his cash back—I don't think!"

Whatever Robbins's object was, he seemed to be well satisfied with his company, for he and the sport went on for two blocks before pausing. Then they entered a side door next to a saloon and disappeared.

Reddy now did a rash thing. If he had been prudent he would have risked less and seen less. He took chances in his usual reckless way, and, giving them a little time, entered the same door, himself. He thought it good detective strategy, but it was simply a big risk.

He found himself in total darkness.

"Don't like this!" he admitted, "but ef they kin travel here, I kin. Up I go!"

Steps above directed him a little, and he mounted the stairs. By the time he reached the top all was still, and he yet had the darkness to combat. Which way was he to go?

He was studying this point when he heard voices very distinctly.

"Trot out the kid!" ordered somebody.

"Here he comes."

"Well, here he is. Now, what are we to do with him?"

"I want to go home!" came in a mournful tone, which was plainly that of a small boy—one smaller than Reddy, it seemed.

"Don't whimper!"

"But I am afraid of you, and I want—"

"Stop his mouth!"

The order was impatient, rather than angry, and it was not likely that it was carried out severely, but the small voice ceased to be heard. Reddy nodded his head wisely.

"Them crooks have got a kid in limbo!" he soliloquized, wrathfully. "I'm a good mind ter go in an' walk all over their collar-

buttons—but no real detective would be so sudden. I'll go slow."

"Well, what's to be done?" demanded another person, who, plainly, was the sport.

"Come aside and we will talk it over," answered Robbins.

There was a sound of feet moving on the floor, and Reddy heard no more. He wrinkled his brow in a scowl.

"Hang your caution! But I'll git hock with you!" he commented.

Ten minutes passed, and then there was a new sound. The men had returned to their former position.

"Come, boy!" directed the sport.

"Where?" was the response.

"With us."

"I don't want to. No, I don't, an' I won't go. So there, now!"

"Dry up! Come!"

There was another sound, now; that of a struggle; but it was soon over. Reddy heard the panting breathing of some one he judged was the other boy, and his wrath grew even greater.

"Them snakes are using their muscles ter do the kid dirt!" he exclaimed. "So they will abduct him? Wal, maybe, an' then, again, maybe somethin' else! They will come out; this hall is dark, an'—"

The Rusher doubled up his fist, and the sentence was left unfinished. He had, however, arrived at a decision, which was reckless even for him.

The door opened. He had sight of Robbins and the sport, and in the grasp of the latter he saw the unknown boy, a pleasing youth in appearance, and not over seven years old.

"Hurry!" urged Israel.

"Go along, and we will soon have it over," asserted the sport.

"Let me go!" panted the captive.

"Hush your racket, or I will squeeze your neck for you."

The door closed and the party started away. Where they were going Reddy did not know, but he was there, now, with a purpose. They had not seen him, but he had studied his situation well, and he now leaped at them like a young wild-cat. He was bound to help the strange boy, and his efforts were directed to that end.

He smashed into the sport with force which nearly knocked him off of his feet, and this wholly loosened his hold on the captive.

"Skip!" cried the rescuer.

Nobody could say what might have been the result if there had been a light. All was dark, and this is what happened. There was a general collision, and Reddy was knocked down. He fell on top of somebody else; another person fell on him, and the Rusher could not tell which pair of arms belonged to him, nor which to the others, so tightly were all mixed up.

He found the location of his fists in a short time, however, and he shot them out in zealous blows upon whatever he could find.

"Skip!" he again ordered.

The mass of flesh around him wriggled in a business way, and as he realized that his companions would soon be on their feet, he made an effort, himself, and rose. All this while there had been disorder around him, but, now, the voice of the sport rose to some purpose:

"Block the stairs; don't let anybody pass!"

CHAPTER III.

ADVENTURES THICKEN.

REDDY did not know where the other boy was, but he knew it was time to look out for Number One. He made a forward dive toward the stairs, as he thought, and found clear way. He raced along unopposed, but did not find the stairs.

"Crickey! I've gone wrong!" was his thought.

It dawned upon him that whoever had been in the room had blown out the light, and that he was there. How was he to get out?

The sport and Robbins were both talking behind him, and he dared not go that way. Nothing being left him but to move on, he did so. Still in the dark he found another door and pushed through.

"Pokerish as a tomb!" he thought, "but a real detective would do just this."

He suddenly caught sight of a gleam of light at one side, and as all of New York could not be wicked, he decided to make a break in that quarter and see what would come of it. He found a door and pushed it open. He saw another room beyond with a single occupant—an old woman who sat at a table with something spread out in front of her. She was examining it closely, but Reddy was not disposed to let time go to waste.

"Ma'am," he cried, "I want ter git out!"

The old woman did not stir, and he saw no sign that he was heard.

He tried it again.

"How can I get out?"

Still the old woman bent over the table, and he advanced none at all in his business.

"Deef as a perlecceman when he is told a saloon is open on Sunday. Shall I punch her in the twenty-fifth rib? Hi! there's footsteps in the hall. I'll skip!"

Reddy's eyes were sharp, and, believing his enemies were close after him, he took in the whole scene and acted with celerity. He dodged into a closet at one side. It was not the kind of a refuge he wanted, for it left him penned up, but anything was better than capture.

He pulled the door to, and just then the other door opened. In walked a man whose appearance was such that Reddy had no trouble in sizing him up immediately.

"A tough from Toughville!" he murmured, looking out of his lair.

The new-comer was certainly all that the Rusher claimed, unless his looks did him great injustice. He had a face seamed and scarred, and hard of aspect, and his whole manner was of the swaggering, bull-dog sort. In brief, he was less than twenty-five years old, but he looked as if he was well advanced in crime. This man came to the table at once and brought his fist down on it with a resounding thump.

"Wake up!" he almost shouted.

The old woman stirred and fixed a pair of water eyes on him.

"Is it you, deary?" she asked.

"Who in thunder do you think et is?—Rothschild?"

"No, no, deary; but I was thinkin'—"

"You are always thinkin'. Stop et! Let up on et! Cheeze et! Your head is as thick now as a barrel. Do some more thinkin' an' et will get solid. How's things?"

"Nicely, deary; nicely. He has been here, an' he left this."

She flaunted a bill before his eyes, and he, as well as Reddy Rusher, caught sight of a greenback on the paper. Reddy understood then what had so held the old woman's attention.

The tough snatched the bill.

"Hi!" he cried, "a fiver! Say, you've struck et rich."

"He gave et to me; he wanted his secrets kept."

"Hully gee! but we kin keep 'em at that rate all correct. This fiver will buy good beer. So Hearty Jack has been with you?"

"Yes, deary."

"He is willin' ter pay fer keepin' our mouths shut, eh?"

"He has to," croaked the old woman. "He don't want ter, an' he says he ain't got much money—"

"Stuff! Moll Dunn, ef you let him cram that lie down your neck I will land one on you!" declared the tough.

"Don't fear, Johnny; don't fear! Can the mother of a lad like you be too soft to look out for herself?"

"Wal, you are quite a hustler fer cash, I will admit. Don't let Hearty Jack muzzle you, though. Have you heard any rumpus in the house to-night?"

"Not a sound, Johnny."

Reddy grinned. The old woman was not deaf, but she seemed to have the faculty of sinking out of life, as it were, so fully that she might as well have had no ears. Her hopeful son tossed the bill back on the table.

"You may keep et, old woman," he said.

"Has business been good to-night?"

He pulled two watches and a purse out of his pocket.

"Glue yer eyes on them!" he directed.

"Ho, ho! Where did you get them, Johnny?"

"Where do you suppose? A gang of Dutchmen had a chowder party to-day, and when they got back ter the city they marched up Eighth aveny with music. Ha, ha! I didn't lose the chance ter prove my name good, an' I salted the guys who folered the percesh."

The fellow struck an attitude and sung in a hoarse voice something which seemed to be an original composition:

"My name is Chowder Johnny,
I feed on greenhorn money;
When chowder parties walk the street,
I yank the purses cool an' neat;
As long as guys are on the sod,
An honest man may have his wad!"

Moll clapped her hands.

"Beautiful, beautiful!" she exclaimed. "Johnny, you are a born poet, an' you ought ter git appointed fer this deestruck. Keep et up, my lad, an' you'll be equal ter your father."

"He's in Sing Sing, I believe."

"Ah! but he was a noble man, an' he never got ketched while his eyes held out. A noble man, an' a born thief!"

"My lamps are good, an' I mean ter keep them so. Moll, I am goin' ter bed. See that you don't make no noise around here."

Johnny walked into another room and disappeared. Moll returned to her adoration of the bank-note, while the Rusher shook his head. He had passed all his life in a rough vicinity, but he was impressed with the belief that Chowder Johnny and his mother were a little ahead of the average in wickedness and moral depravity.

"What's all this talk about Hearty Jack?" he wondered. "That is the name by which Israel Robbins called his cousin that he accused o' robbin' him of his bag of gold. Moll said Hearty Jack had a secret which he paid her to keep. I seem ter be gettin' deep inter this game. Yes, an' I am deep in trouble, too."

Reddy wished to leave the house, but he was not sure he could do it. Moll was in the way, and it was, he feared, hoping for too much to expect her to be oblivious again.

"Wonder where Israel, the other feller an' the kid are?"

This question was so potent in the Rusher's mind that he became more and more unwilling to remain in captivity, and decided to make a stir for liberty at once.

Moll brooded over the bill and delighted her eyes by looking at it. He concluded to start cautiously, and run if he had to. Out of the closet he stepped—"soft and steady," he thought.

Moll did not raise her head, so on he went toward the door, but with eyes fixed on the old woman.

The Rusher reached the door; his hand on the knob turned it! the way was clear! He passed out into the hall and closed the door after him.

"Hi! that was rich luck!" he thought. "Now ter git out!"

He was now again in the dark, but he remembered the way and pressed on with care until he reached the front hall. This done, he proceeded down the stairs, and soon the street was reached in safety.

The only person in sight was a small boy, who had a quantity of roasted chestnuts in a big tin dish. Acting on a sudden impulse, the Rusher accosted him.

"Say, how long have you been here?" he asked, abruptly.

"Sence six o'clock," was the business-like reply.

"Seen anybody leave this house lately?"

"Yes; two men an' a boy."

"Hi! that so? Which way did they go?"

"Down that way," and the boy pointed away from the Bowery side.

"How long ago?"

"Bout half an hour."

This was enough; there was no use of pursuing.

"Gimme five cents' worth o' chestnuts," he directed.

The purchase made, he ambled off homeward, eating nuts and thinking.

"I've got inter this thing up ter my waist," he meditated. I ain't on ter all o' et, by a long shot. Be Israel an' Hearty Jack both crooked? Who is the boy? What do they want ter do with him? What is the mystery of all this? Crickey! but I'll find out ef I can; I'll jest pipe the whole lot o' them until I get onter it. I will so!"

This resolution quickened his pace, and he held his head proudly erect, wondering how it would seem to see newspaper articles concerning Reddy Rush, detective! If the articles were as big as his ambition he would surely make a sensation.

Reaching the hotel, he was about to try to pass Briggs quietly, when Eunice came flying down in an excited way.

"Oh!" she cried, breathlessly, "they are at it up in Robbins's room again!"

"What now?" demanded Briggs.

"I don't know, but there is somebody with Robbins, and a row is on. Oh! I do fear there will be murder done."

"I will see about this!" exclaimed Briggs, angrily.

"So will I!" and Reddy sped along by the clerk's side.

They had enough to hasten them, for, as Eunice had said, there was certainly a "row on" in the room filled by Israel Robbins. What was it?

CHAPTER IV.

HEARTY JACK, THE SAILOR.

WHEN the upper hall was reached the noise was still vociferous, and Reddy Rusher turned a gloomy face toward Briggs.

"Nobody ain't killed yet!" he lamented.

Reaching Israel's room, he flung the door open.

"Hi! the sailor chap!" escaped Reddy's lips.

A man was there in full sailor dress, and, as he was another of the guests of the hotel, they did not need an introduction. It was Israel's assumed cousin.

Despite this, there did not seem to be any kinsman-like good will, at that moment. Hearty Jack was sad of face, if not frightened, and Israel looked angry and wild-eyed.

"What's goin' on?" demanded Briggs, sharply.

Israel leveled his long finger at Jack.

"That man is a thief!" he exclaimed.

"No, no!" protested the sailor.

"He is; he has stole my bag of gold—"

"No, no!"

"And I demand that you make him give it back."

"I did not touch—"

"I say you did! You did, you did! You did—"

Thus far the cousins were having it all to themselves, but Briggs had come there to restore order.

"Shut your mouths, both of you!" he ordered, warmly. "I won't have any more of such nonsense. If you try it I will fire both of you out of the window. You hear me? Now, settle down and talk like human beings. We are not deaf. Talk low!"

Hearty Jack had not been talking loud at all, so the reproof hit only Israel. But, he did not mind it. His nerve was equal to anything. Nevertheless, he moderated his voice, and, again pointing an accusing finger at the sailor, he added:

"There's the thief!"

"How do you know? What grounds have you for the accusation?"

"He has none," declared Hearty Jack, quickly. "I am innocent."

"Was there a bag of gold?"

"Yes."

"Did you bring it from Australia?"

"Yes."

"How much was it worth?"

"Ten thousand dollars," hurriedly put in Israel.

"Has your cousin a tongue?"

"Why, of course—"

"Then let him speak for himself. I have heard your story. You can talk all you wish, later on. Where were you, to-night, Hearty Jack, when this robbery took place?"

The sailor's eyes sought Israel's face, as if he did not dare to answer unaided, but Israel said nothing. Jack was just as mute.

"Can you prove an *alibi*?" pursued Briggs.

"I am innocent."

"Nonsense! You weary me. Were you in the hotel? Did you hear the racket that Robbins made, when he found out the stuff was gone?"

"No. I was not here."

"Have you been here this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"Did you see the boy?"

Jack's eyes wandered to Reddy.

"What boy?"

"Not this one; the one who was in Robbins's room."

"There was no boy in my room!" asserted Israel, with spirit. "If that gol-darned chambermaid of yours says so, she jest lies. She does, by gum!"

Briggs was confident that he was not getting one half of the truth. Israel was not dealing fairly with him, and Hearty Jack was silent from reasons not easy to understand, though it was plain that he stood very much in awe of Israel. Whether this was due to the accusation of theft, or something else, was not to be understood, but Briggs knew there was a mystery back of it all.

He let a part of the inquiry drop, but the matter of the bag of gold interested him.

"Hearty Jack, you are poorly clad. You do not look like a rich man. How does it happen you carry ten thousand dollars around with you in gold and otherwise? Why did you, a sailor, go to the diggin's? Did you do placer mining?"

Mr. Briggs was not a miner, himself, and he did not know what terms were common to the Australian mines, but he fished around in his memory and found a term he had often heard applied in the West. Jack immediately looked bewildered and turned his gaze on Israel.

"What does all this amount to—"

The man from Ulster county began hurriedly, but Briggs cut him short with sharp emphasis.

"I am talking to your cousin, sir. Answer me!"

Hearty Jack wiped his brow.

"This—this is trivial!" he muttered. "I have no mind to talk of such things, sir. Please excuse me; I am all broken up."

"I may as well buck against a rock,"

thought Briggs. Then he added, aloud: "Well, we will drop this for a while, on one condition. I want no more rowing in this room. If I have another call to come here I will pitch the two of you out of doors. See?"

It was strong language to guests, but neither resented it. Jack meekly said that he saw.

"Go to your room!"

The sailor looked at Israel. Israel nodded, and Jack shuffled off as directed. In a few minutes both doors were closed, and Briggs was at liberty to go down to the office. He went, followed by Reddy.

"Wal, that's gallus!" freely commented 4-11-44.

"I have a good mind to call in the police and ask them to arrest both of that precious pair."

Briggs was angry, and meant all he said.

"Hearty Jack seems innocent."

"He is accused of robbery, and don't meet the charge like an honest man. If he is innocent why did he squirm so when I tried to question him?"

"He is dead afraid of Uncle Sam."

"I guess that is correct enough."

"Don't you be rash, Briggsy, but jest let them fellers have plenty o' rope. Somethin' will come o' this."

Reddy spoke confidently, but, at the bottom of it all, was simply his desire to play the role of hotel detective. He did not see any daylight, but was eager to investigate and find out the facts.

"Why," he mused, as he finally lay on his bed, "bein' Bell-boy 4-11-44 is nothin' compared ter being a detective. I'll hev them stiffs out o' their hole or go inter mine. I will, sure pop, an' then—"

And then things grew dim around Reddy and he was asleep.

He was up in the morning bright and early, despite his exertions of the previous night. Having dressed and left his room he descended to the kitchen. As the son of the proprietor he had full run of the house, of course, but he found somebody there who was not supposed to have such liberties.

"Israel Robbins!"

He stopped short as he saw the man from Ulster county, and the words barely passed his lips. Israel did not see him in return, but, attired in his long coat and tall hat, and armed with his cane, he was making himself known to the cook.

"Yes, I do want a bite. Can't stop to wait fer breakfast, but don't let me put you out. Give me a bite o' somethin' handy—apple pie an' a few doughnuts will do—an' I'll be off. You see, I've been robbed of a pile o' money, an' I must git it back."

"Robbed?" echoed the cook.

"Yes. Cleaned out of ten thousand dollars."

The Rusher grimaced.

"He's givin' her that old chestnut!" muttered the boy, in disgust.

"Dear me, sir; I hope it wasn't in this house?" responded the cook.

"But it was," replied Israel, thumping his cane on the floor. "It was done right here, an' I am goin' out to play the part of a detective, an' I'll bet you a new gown I get it back, by gum!"

Israel was really interested in his own story. He was getting the attentive audience from the cook which he had not been able to command elsewhere, and he was disposed to be generous in promises to such a model woman. He did not notice that the Rusher had appeared on the scene, but the latter was there, and grimacing behind the countryman's back. Israel was suddenly made aware of a part of this fact.

"Hi!" Reddy broke in, "you will make a rattlin' detective, you will. You'll find the bag of gold—I don't think!"

Israel turned abruptly.

CHAPTER V.

REDDY FOLLOWS A CLEW.

THE man from Ulster county had detected the scoffing tone of the speaker, and when he saw who it was he grew angry.

"So you are here!" he snapped.

"I ain't in Hoboken," coolly replied Reddy.

"Wal, you jest git out o' here, or I'll lay this cane over your back. Understand?"

"You won't do nothin' of the sort, an' ef you try et I'll call a porter an' have you chucked outer the dive. See?"

Reddy threw his hands up like a professional, and the cook could not avoid laughing. Israel was evidently half inclined to keep his threat, but he knew he was dealing with the son of the proprietor of the house, and he wisely decided not to be too rash. He abruptly turned to the cook again.

"May I have some doughnuts?" he asked, meekly.

"Do you feed yer summer boarders on them things?" inquired Reddy.

"They are glad to git them."

"We don't keep 'em in stock. You will have ter go ter the Fifth Avenue Hotel ter git such delicacies, or back ter Ulster county. You kin afford quail on toast, I reckon, fer ef there's a robber on the earth, it's a man who takes summer boarders, I've heard."

"Never mind the boy," soothingly added the cook. "He don't mean any harm. I am sorry, but I can't give you a lunch here. Breakfast will be ready in a few minutes, now."

"Hang your city ways!" muttered Israel, "you put on too many airs!"

He turned away and walked from the kitchen. He would not have been in so much haste, but he was not disposed to be friendly with Reddy, and if the boy was to be there he did not want to remain.

"Well, that's a queer old chap!" exclaimed the cook.

"Susie, I'll bet a hat he came ter make love to you."

"He didn't succeed, if he did. I guess he's got all he can attend to now. He says the mourning band on his hat is for his wife, who died lately, and that he has a pretty young housekeeper in place of her."

"I pity the housekeeper. She must—"

The Rusher stopped short and made a dive for something on the floor. He picked up a card.

"Whose is this?" he asked. "Yours?"

"No. The old man must have dropped it."

"Sure?"

"Either you or he, for the floor has just been swept, and it was not there a moment ago."

"Guess Ulster dropped et out o' his long-tailed gown."

Reddy was studying the card closely. It had a name printed on it, and he read thoughtfully.

"Mayo Montgomery. I wonder who he is?"

"There ain't no way for you to find out."

"I ain't so sure o' that. His address is given here. Mayo Montgomery! Wal, that's a romantic name. Et would jest fit a sport—"

Reddy stopped, meditated for a moment, and then thrust the card into his pocket.

"I reckon I will keep this thing," he added.

"The man may come back for it."

"Say, ef he does, tell him you ain't seen et, will ye? Will ye?"

The Rusher took on a pleading tone, and the cook gave the promise. Reddy sat down to think upon his new acquisition. He was not sure it meant anything, but, having mentioned that the name fitted a "sport," he had thought of the fancy person he had seen with Israel, the previous night.

"I believe I will look inter this," he re-

sumed. "I want ter press my detective case hot. The lost bag o' gold is a puzzle all around, an' then there is the small boy that Israel and the sport hev got in limbo. They carried him off last night, an' they must have him somewhere now. Wonder ef I kin git the kid out o' hock?"

Reddy was several years older than the captive boy, and, in view of that fact, he was assuming an air of maturity which his stature hardly justified.

Presently he went up-stairs to see what the Ulster county man was doing.

Israel sat idle until he had his breakfast; then he sat down and continued in idleness. Plainly, he was doing a good deal of thinking on some subject. A little later he was asked to step into the private office and see the proprietor of the hotel, and he went, though without any great evidence of alacrity.

"Now's my time!" murmured Reddy. "Pop Rush is a great chinner, an' he will keep Israel until noon, ef Is. will set an' listen. Now's my time, by crickey!"

Feeling to see that he had the card, he left the hotel.

His course was east of the Bowery, and he marched along with agile feet. In due time he reached the address given on the card. He found a brick house, neither better nor worse than its neighbors, and one which told no tales. He wished it would; he wanted to know if Israel's sport companion was there, and he did not know how to do it.

He meditated for awhile, and then slapped his hand on his leg.

"I have et!" he exclaimed.

He marched off to a well-known dry-goods store, and entered with an air of confidence. Finding the proper counter he directed:

"Show me a smokin' cap."

The clerk regarded him with a covert smile.

"Turkish?" he asked.

"I don't care whether et's Turkish or Chinese, but jest trot et out sorter sudden. That's what you're paid fer, ain't et?"

The clerk was vexed with the result of his attempt to dally with his customer, but he then attended strictly to business. Reddy selected a cap for a dollar, which he believed amply good enough for his ends, and it was soon wrapped up and in his possession. He never had been kept short of money, and he paid for it without reaching the bottom of his pocket.

This done, he left the store and bent his steps again toward the house, where, according to the card, Mr. Mayo Montgomery lived. He rung the bell with calm confidence, and nodded coolly to the maid who answered the summons.

"Parcel fer Mr. Montgomery, ter be delivered in person," he announced.

"Second floor, front."

"Thank ye; you can go."

Reddy's coolness in disposing of the girl was refreshing, but he did not wait to see if she obeyed his direction. He mounted the stairs and found his way to the room indicated. He knocked; a voice bade him enter; he opened the door and passed over the threshold.

A man was there, and, as he had hoped, he saw the sport who had been with Israel the previous night. As the boy had not been seen by his present companion then, he was not recognized now.

"Mr. Mayo Montgomery?" asked Reddy.

"That's my name."

"Parcel fer you."

"Parcel for me?" repeated Montgomery. "I did not expect any."

"I reckon et's a present."

"Oh! that alters the case. Give it here. You can go—"

"I was ter wait an' see ef there was an answer."

"Oh! Sit down, then."

Montgomery was equipped with a house-

coat of gorgeous pattern, but he was without a smoking cap, and Reddy felt that he had hit it rich in selecting the present. He watched while Mayo undid the parcel.

The sport stared blankly at the contents.

"Say, what's this jigger?" he asked.

"Looks like a church contribution-box," suggested Reddy, with fine sarcasm.

"I should say it did, but it seems to be a cap of some sort."

Mayo tried it on, and then removed it and surveyed it again.

"Men have fads," he pursued, "but I never knew any of my friends to wear things like this. A regular smoking cap, if I size it up correctly. A queer thing, by Jove! Give me a black mustache and a little lamp-black on the cheeks and I would look like a Turk. Say, boy, who sent this jigger?"

"Dunno, sir?"

"A man?"

Reddy had been intending to tell of a mysterious man in the case, but something in Mayo's manner changed his plan. Mayo appeared to be willing to hear a negative reply.

"I don't think it was. Another boy give it to me, an' I understood—I ain't positive about this—that he said et was a female woman who give et to him. Dunno much about it. I was jest ter bring et ter you, an' as I got my price I wasn't perticular about no more."

Mayo was gratified. Plainly, he had an idea as to the donor, and his suspicion pointed to a woman—some special woman. He asked a good many questions, and Reddy had to tell just where he had met the unknown boy, and what the latter looked like. All this gave no more light to Mayo, but it helped the Rusher on somewhat.

The latter had not been kept standing all this while. Mayo had lighted a cigar, fixed the cap on his head and sat down. He talked about his new acquisition until the subject was exhausted, and then came a lull.

Reddy had been quietly taking in all the features of the room. He was somewhat disappointed because there was not a bag of gold on the table and a captive boy on a chair in the corner—that was the way he had planned it—but he was in the lair of the lion and he hoped for something yet.

CHAPTER VI.

REDDY AS A "HIRED MAN."

MAYO allowed conversation to flag, but he kept his gaze fixed on his companion's face. There was that in his gaze which gave the Rusher a theory.

"He's studyin' of me!" thought the quick-witted boy.

Presently the sport aroused from his abstraction. In a quiet way he began to speak of general matters, but Reddy was shrewd enough to see that all he said drifted in one direction, and that was to "size up" the boy who had brought the present. In brief, the Rusher thought that Mayo wished to know whether he was a very conscientious person, or inclined to be tough.

Reddy had an object to attain, and he did not let Mayo remain in ignorance. Without over-doing the pretense, he assumed ways and opinions that seemed to mark him down as a free and easy city youth who had no regard for honor or law.

This evidently pleased Mayo, and he finally remarked:

"You don't seem to be very busy."

"The bank where I am cashier shut up last week," answered Reddy gravely. "We had so much money we had ter fight depositors away."

"Out of a job, eh?"

"Yes, unless I take the presidency o' the Broadway Cable Road. They are coaxin' me ter do that."

"Do you want to make a dollar?"

"Yes, or two of them."

"Suppose it was a case where you would be asked to keep a still mouth and not be too thin-skinned?"

"With a dollar back of it?"

"Yes."

"The job an' the money would jest about fit my case."

Reddy assumed a swagger as he said this, and Mayo laughed lightly.

"I guess you are all right," he remarked. "Come with me and I'll see if the dollar can be found."

He discarded his new cap for a tall hat, and they left the house. Thus far all was going finely, and the Rusher trotted along by Mayo's side with all the coolness in the world. He was free from fear, and eager for adventure.

Their journey took them across the Bowery, and still further. Reddy had hoped it would be to the house where he had followed Israel the night before, but it was not so. Several blocks' distance from that edifice they paused, Mayo fitted a key and they entered a house.

He led the way straight to a room on the third floor, and then walked into a room, with the Rusher at his heels.

Reddy had a discovery awaiting him. The room had an occupant, and it was none other than Chowder Johnny.

"I'm gettin' inter the swim!" thought the adventuresome boy, with exultation.

Chowder Johnny was not a polite man, usually, but he now hustled around with alacrity and set a chair for Mayo, and made him welcome in a rough-and-ready fashion.

The sport lost but little time.

"How is everything?" he asked, quickly.

"Fine!" replied Johnny.

"Do you like your new quarters?"

"Boss, they are great."

"And your mother?"

"Moll is dreamin' over her greenbacks. She don't kncw much else when she sees the green."

"And your cousin?"

Mayo smiled as he asked the question, and Johnny grinned in like amusement as he answered:

"All quiet, boss."

"Does he take it easy?"

"He whimpers and whines a bit, but he ain't made no racket."

"It will be all right, no doubt. You want to attend to him well, my man. No more chowder parties while this job is on."

"The Dutchmen an' the jays kin parade safe as long as I have this lay-out!" declared Johnny. "I suppose me pal, Petey Glynn, will howl when he hears I have shook the chowder game, but biz is biz. De tickers an' leathers are good ter see an' feel, but nothin' compared with a house-lay. Besides, some jay is liable ter pull a gun on a chowder racket."

Reddy was a son of New York, and as he knew of the practice of toughs in robbing the people who became mixed up in the returning pleasure parties, he found nothing enigmatical about this.

Neither did Mayo, and this address passed without comment.

"Johnny," pursued the sport, "I have brought the boy to do your errands, if we can agree with him."

The tough fixed a scrutinizing gaze upon Reddy. The latter did not have the face of a prospective dude. It was a rough, rugged face, and his red hair was just then very much tumbled and unprepossessing. Johnny looked his fill and then nodded.

"He's all right."

"You are to keep him just as an errand boy, you know, so that you can send word to me at a moment's warning, if necessary."

"I remember w'ot you said before."

"Here is the boy I promised. The question is, will he take the position?"

Reddy was cautious enough not to be too hot to say yes, and he allowed them to sound.

him to their fill before they were fully convinced, themselves.

When it was done his duties were explained, and they were simply to remain in the house under good pay and run errands when called upon.

"This sorter divorces me from Pop Rush an' the hotel," mused the Rusher, "but a detective can't be too much bound up in home-ties. I am with 'em!"

This decision made he announced it, and he formally enrolled for the duties of his new task. Why he was wanted he did not yet know, but he felt sure he was about to enter upon a striking era.

"It's the first time I've been a hired man," he modestly remarked, "but I am willin' ter rise in the world, ef I don't get too high fer the good o' my neck!"

This was said to impress his companions, and it succeeded to a charm. Both men laughed loudly, and they felt sure they had a fine aid in the new recruit.

"Now," added Mayo, presently, "I will take you into the next room. It will be your own quarters. Of course there are other persons in the building, but you are to have nothing to do with them. Do not go near them, or let them come near you. In the room next to you is an old woman. She has rather a quarrelsome husband, when he comes home drunk, and a sharp tongued daughter who will scold some, probably; and then there is a whimpering boy. You will ignore all of these people."

"All right, boss."

Reddy answered cheerfully, but he did not put all his thoughts into words. It occurred to him that all of the persons mentioned were myths except the old woman and the boy.

"I am on the track!" he thought, jubilantly. "I'll hev them out o' their holes, by crickey!"

Mayo rose and opened another door.

"Walk in and make yourself at home," he directed. "Johnny and I will stay here and have a smoke."

The Rusher went, and the sport closed the door and retreated. Reddy was alone.

He looked around—he was in a very ordinary-looking room, and he experienced a feeling of disappointment.

"Is this all I am to strike?" he wondered. "Where is the red hot fun I am longin' fer?"

Suddenly he bent forward, listening, and then went closer to one of the walls. He placed his ear close to the plaster and listened.

Voices were audible beyond.

"I don't like you, and I won't sit near you!"

It was a boyish tone.

"Oh! come, now, deary, don't be foolish. Come to Mother Moll, an' I will give you some candy, some time."

It was a woman's voice, and Reddy did not need the name to enable him to place it.

"Cickey!" he exclaimed. "Chowder Johnny's mother is in there, an' the mysterious kid is with her. I am onter the trail like a perleeceman after an Eytalian's apples!"

Again the voices.

"You are a mean old woman! I didn't know a woman could be so mean. These men have stolen me away and shut me up, and now you go and help them. You are awful mean; you are."

"Say, deary, why did they steal you?"

"They want my money."

"Money—money? Have you got money?" and Mother Moll's voice grew eager.

"Yes, I have, and that is why they do this. I have studied it all out. They want to rob me."

"Deary, deary, let me see the money!" quickly requested Moll.

"I haven't got any here; they have taken

it all away. But when I get clear I will have it back—yes, I will, or I'll fix them."

"I'm dead onter et!" chuckled Reddy. "The kid is there, an' I will—"

He stopped short, ran to the door next to the room where Mayo and Chowder Johnny were, and then grew startled of face.

"Israel has come!" he added, excitedly. "Cickey! I shall be done up, now. The jig is up, ef he sees me!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE RUSHEE'S TIGHT CORNER.

THERE was ample ground for this sudden fear, for Israel Robbins was there. Reddy had learned to know his voice well, and he it was who had joined Mayo Montgomery.

"Yes," added the Rusher, "he is right in the swim with Mayo, and now Mayo has took in a new boy, Old Ulster will want ter see him. When he does there will be a lively time in this section, an' R. Rugh, Esquire, may git the worst of it."

Reddy's eyes turned toward the third room.

"Wonder ef there is any possibility of my bein' able ter run the kid out, right quick?"

It was a bold scheme, but it was rendered doubtful by the fact that guardians were all around. Dropping thought of Israel for awhile, Reddy went to the door which led to the other room. He tried it softly but found it was locked.

"Got left! Now fer the next!"

Above the door was a transom, and the Rusher dragged a chair forward, mounted upon it and explored further. He had no difficulty in tilting the transom a bit, and then he obtained view of the room.

He saw Mother Moll—he saw more.

A boy was with the old woman. He was small of stature and of a different rank in life than the Bowery boy—that was clear. He had on what had but recently been good clothes, but they were now soiled and rumpled. He seemed to have seen hard times.

Reddy thought chiefly of the boy, himself.

He saw a bright face, but not a happy one, just then. The younger boy looked unhappy enough and it was not to be wondered at, Reddy thought. The young stranger, too, was doubtless less qualified by training to endure such things, than a rough-and-ready boy would have been.

Mother Moll was busy, and Reddy let no time go to waste. He put an arm through the transom and waved it widely.

Luck was with him, and the motion was speedily observed by the other boy. He looked; he grew puzzled; he glued his gaze to the arm; he was long in perceiving the face above it. When he did he was even more perplexed.

Fearful that he would do something to attract attention, Reddy tried to impress the need of silence upon him.

He did this by means of facial contortions which were simply marvelous. The Rusher nearly screwed his mouth off his face in doing it, but he judged, finally, that he had accomplished his object. He next motioned the boy to come closer.

The young stranger looked apprehensively at Mother Moll, but her habit of sinking into nothingness was upon her, and she was ignorant of the whole affair. He came to the door.

Reddy was full of fear, himself, but he framed a question.

"Kin you write?"

The boy shook his head.

"Not much," he replied.

"But you kin whisper?"

"Yes."

"Do et gentle. W'ot's yer name?"

"Hugo Westingly."

"Don't say it again; you may hurt yer back teeth. Be you a captive?"

"Yes. Oh! won't you let me out?"

"Gently, my friend, gently. Don't yell

so Moll will hear ye. Kin you slide out, anyhow?"

"No."

"Is the door fastened on the other side?"

"Yes; it is locked."

Reddy shook his head. The room he was in had no door which led to the hall, and he could not pass out by way of that where Mayo and his allies were. He looked sharply at Mother Moll, wondering if he could beat her out in a struggle.

"Won't you let me out?" repeated Hugo.

"Is there a key in your room?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"She has it;" and Hugo pointed to Mother Moll.

"Oh! ef I was in there!" thought Reddy. "I'd git that key or make Moll sick, by crickey!"

"Hurry up!" warned Hugo. "She will ketch us, sure."

"Kin I get through this transom?"

"I don't know."

"I'll find out."

The Rusher was prepared for decisive action. Gone were all his plans for secrecy and cunning. He decided to risk all in an attempt to secure the key from the old woman.

The transom was small—so was he. He believed he could wriggle through the opening, and he made the attempt. The table raised him well up, and he swung himself clear, and was in for the venture. He hung in mid-air, half in one room and half in the other.

As he writhed he kept a sharp watch on Mother Moll, and in this he had company in Hugo. The latter was very much alarmed, it seemed, and he watched the woman with bated breath.

Reddy did not find his task an easy one, and even he, knowing Moll as he did, was surprised that she did not hear his movements.

Little by little he wormed on his way, and the task proved not to be too much for him. At last he was more than half through, and it only remained to drop.

Here he was at a loss for a moment, but a motion to Hugo led him to bring a chair. Into this the adventurer dropped lightly.

Moll was still crooning over something which may have been the five-dollar bill she so worshiped.

The Rusher considered it little less than wonderful that the previous conversation with Hugo had not been overheard. He wanted to talk more now, but it was risky. Hugo was all eager expectancy, but Reddy was a little at a loss.

How was he to get the coveted key?

Doubtless Moll had it, but the job of getting it away looked bigger now he was on the scene. He put his mouth close to Hugo's ear.

"Be you good on a scrap?"

"A—a what?"

"Scrap—fight."

"I—I don't know."

"We may hev ter find out. Now, I'm goin' ter sneak up back o' the ole dame an' try ter get the key on the dead q. t. Ef she tumbles an' gits rusty, jest you swing ter her weazin, will ye?"

"I don't understand."

"Ef she yelps, swing yer arms around her neck an' hold on fer keeps. See?"

"Yes."

"Come on, then!"

Bending low and moving with all possible caution Reddy advanced on his prey. Moll continued to bend over the table, and her back was fully toward them.

Softly, slowly with cat-like motion Reddy crawled nearer. He saw nothing to alarm him, and he planned with his usual freedom. There was soon chance to do more. He reached the critical point, and then paused.

He had detected the old woman's pocket widely flapping, and his hand stole toward it. His fingers touched the cloth. A little more of good luck and the key would be—

Thump, thump, thump!

It was a knock at the door, and the Rusher stopped short, alarmed at last. Somebody was seeking admittance, and he did not need to be told who it was.

"Oh!" gasped Hugo.

Reddy's wits did not desert him. It would never do to be found there, and he took steps to avoid it. The old woman turned her eyes toward the door, and just then Reddy dropped and disappeared beneath the table. He turned a resolute face toward Hugo, made a motion calling for silence on the part of his new acquaintance, and then dropped the table cover behind him.

As this cloth was of good size, he was wholly hidden.

Thump, thump, thump!

Again came the knock, and Mother Moll came into life. She rose, shuffled to the door and produced the coveted key. With this she unlocked it, and Israel Robbins walked in.

He took a rapid survey of the room, but Reddy, peering out of his ambush, believed there was no suspicion in the man's face. Israel nodded to Moll.

"How goes it?" he asked.

"All right, deary," she croaked.

"Like your new quarters?"

"Yes, deary."

"And the boy?"

Robbins turned upon Hugo. The latter shrank away, and Israel laughed harshly.

"Why, the little fool is scared 'most to death. See! He trembles like a jellybag. Never have seen him so scared. Boy, what's got hold of you, all at once?"

Hugo tried to speak, but he could not. He remembered Reddy under the table, and it was because he had a friend near, and hope and despair were in the balance that he was so broken up now.

"Lost all your pluck, ain't you?" pursued Robbins. "Rather think I will eat you up, eh? Seen any signs of it? Come, boy, speak out! What ails you?"

CHAPTER VIII.

LIVELY WORK FOR THE RUSHER.

REDDY watched and listened from his covert. He was well aware that Hugo's extreme agitation rose from the fact that he was under the table and he feared the boy would not prove equal to the task of keeping the secret. Hugo's intentions were good, but it was a severe test for one so young.

"I don't know what does ail me," answered Hugo, feebly.

"Has anybody hurt you?"

"No."

"Have you seen any signs that you are to be hurt?"

"I want to go away!" suddenly, shrilly declared Hugo. "I don't like here, and I don't like any of you. Let me go."

"There, there! Don't break that way or we shall have to tie your mouth up so you can't speak at all. You shall go in due time."

"You are not my friend. Where is Hearty Jack?"

"Oh, you want him, do you?"

"Yes. He was—he was good to me," and the boy choked down a sob.

"We will let you go to him later on. We don't want you to do anything to harm yourself—"

"You don't talk sense!" asserted Hugo, with an abrupt return of spirit. "You want to be kind of sensible if you say anything to me."

"Well, well, my young peacock!" muttered Israel, surprised.

"You are a low, mean man, but you can't fool me. If you had your rights you would be in the jail."

Israel stared hard, and then a half-smile crossed his face.

"I guess the less I say to such a plucky rooster as you, the better it will be for me."

He turned to Mother Moll. She had relapsed into oblivion, but he punched her in the ribs and brought her back to life.

"Is everything goin' wal, old woman?" he added.

"Lovely, deary; lovely!"

"See that you don't get forgetful. You know why I took the youngster away from your neighbors in the other house—they didn't attend to business. I had Mayo Montgomery hire this place and bring you an' Chowder Johnny an' the boy here, an' now I want you ter be sharp and faithful."

"I will, deary."

Just then there were footsteps again, and Chowder Johnny came in hastily. Reddy could see him distinctly, and he noticed that the tough looked illustrated. He swept a quick glance around the room, taking in all visible things, and winding up by looking, as it seemed, under the table.

The Rusher grew worried. Why did he look there?

Was discovery at hand?

"Did you want anything in here?" abruptly asked Johnny, turning his gaze upon Israel.

"Only to speak with yer mother."

"It's a good bit pleasanter in de front room," pursued Johnny, rapidly. "Come in there an' we will hev a game o' poker."

"I don't play no cards."

"I'll give ye a butt ter smoke, boss."

"I don't smoke, either; it gives me a headache the next mornin'. Never mind, Mr. Dunn; I'd jest as soon set here."

Israel carried out his idea by taking a seat. Chowder Johnny did not relish this new departure. He scowled, and the worried look did not leave his face. Then, without saying more, he came close to the table and kicked the cover back somewhat.

"The jig is up!" thought Reddy.

He prepared to make a rush for freedom, but Johnny did not seize him as he expected. Instead, the tough kicked the cover again and continued to look uneasy.

"What bug is gnawin' at his brain?" wondered the Rusher. "Ef he keeps up his antics, he will show my legs up in public."

Johnny did not try it again, but walked over near Israel and sat down, himself. The man from Ulster county did not appear to see anything unusual in all this, and he began to talk good naturally. He had a poor listener—Johnny made irrelevant replies, and frequently looked under the table.

Reddy grew more and more puzzled. He did not understand the tough. It certainly seemed that his presence was known to Johnny, but, if this was so, why didn't he make the fact known?

"All jangled up!" murmured the Rusher. "I hope he will let the cover alone, now; he will make me visible, by crickey!"

It was rare good luck that the intruder had not been seen before, but, now the kicking was done with, he was well screened by the unusual length of the cover.

"Ef et ain't me, what is he interested in, in here?" wondered Reddy, looking back of him.

Before this he had not explored the recesses of his covert with his eyes, but he did so now. He could see a small box there, but it was an innocent-looking thing of pasteboard, and it did not seem possible that it could be the object of interest.

Johnny's gaze wandered from one to the other of the persons visible, and then he addressed Israel:

"Do yez want the kid any more?"

"No."

"Moll, take him off to bed. He needs a nap."

Mrs. Dunn was used to being ordered around by her son, and she obeyed now with

a cheerful, "I will, deary!" She took Hugo and went.

This done, the tough suddenly warmed up and began to talk rapidly to Robbins, but the latter had dropped in only on an investigating tour, and he did not long delay. Rising, speedily, he announced his intention of going, and Johnny did not stop him.

"Say to Mayo that I will see him again in a few hours," added the man from Ulster.

"He lay down to take a nap when I came in here, and I will not disturb him."

Israel departed, and when Johnny had watched him out of sight he hastened to fasten the door. Next, he went to the door through which Mother Moll had gone with her charge, and secured that in the same way. Closed in, he shot a swift glance around the room.

"I guess I am clear now," he remarked.

With this he made a forward movement toward the table.

"I'm in fer et!" thought Reddy.

It did seem that his time for discovery had come, for Johnny bent and ran his hand under the table. The Rusher was not inclined to hasten his own fate, and he shrunk closer to the wall.

"You jest lay fingers on me," he thought, "an' there will be a prodigious pullin' o' hair around these diggings!"

The tough did not try to follow the movements of his hand with his gaze, but he fished around and finally grasped the pasteboard box. He pulled it out.

Reddy breathed easier. He did not know what the box contained but he had rather it would be seized than himself.

Chowder Johnny rose and stood erect.

"Bully fer our sidel!" muttered the boy in ambush, all of his nonchalance returning.

Johnny went to the table and set the box down. Then he walked first to the north door and then to the south, and listened attentively at each, manifesting a degree of caution very surprising in one of his rough-and-tumble nature.

"Jim-crickey!" murmured Reddy, "wot is eatin' the galoot? He acts as ef he had a bean in his gullet."

Johnny trotted back to the table. Then he hurriedly took off the cover of the pasteboard box.

"Aha, you beauties!" he muttered.

The Rusher lifted his head as high as he dared. He wanted to do his share of seeing.

The tough appeared to gloat over his property, whatever it was. His coarse face was the picture of delight, and he writhed in bliss.

"Glorious!" he exclaimed; "glorious!"

"Wot the dickens has he got?" wondered Reddy. "When such a rounder gits eller-quert it means something."

The Rusher rose so far that if Johnny had chanced to look that way he surely would have seen him. Prudence was lost sight of in the desire to learn all about the mystery of the tough's emotion.

Johnny plunged his hand into the box.

"Glorious!" he repeated.

He raised his hand.

"Oh!" gasped Reddy Rusher.

From Johnny's palm had slowly fallen a rich, yellow ribbon of sand, and the spy was quick to understand it.

"Gold!" he murmured.

Quick of comprehension it had rushed over him in an instant that he had found more than he was looking for. Johnny's extreme caution; his association with Israel, and the fact that the man from Ulster county had lost a bag of gold now became welded in the spy's recollection. He believed he could have told Israel where his missing gold-dust was.

Johnny did not spend much time with the treasure thus exhibited. He had not brought it out because he wanted to gloat over it, but the presence of Israel in the room had led him to fear the gold might have been

meddled with. Now he ceased to gaze and went again to the door to listen and see if the way was clear.

"Can I git that yeller stuff?" wondered Reddy. "Ef I can lay hold of it an' skip it will be a rich snap. I'll try it!"

CHAPTER IX.

REDDY HAS TROUBLE.

THE Rusher had no idea of how he was to carry out his plan, but luck opened the chance. A sudden racket in the room to which Mother Moll and Hugo had gone told that something was wrong there, and Johnny grew angry.

"Cheese it!" he exclaimed. "If that keeps up Mayo will be in here ter see w'ot is up, an' I don't want him nigh the dust. Et must be stopped!"

The tough hurried to the connecting door, unfastened it and threw it open.

"W'ot in thunder be you at?" he growled. "Want the perleece down on us? Ef you don't hush yer noise I'll be in an' smash both o' ye. See?"

He was half way through the door. Reddy was half way out from under the table. He had seen his chance and improved it. Slipping out, he ran to the table with light steps and grasped the treasure. He saw that a bag was inside the box, and he ignored the latter.

Catching up the bag, only, he gave one twist to the string and made for the door which led to the hall. He unlocked it quickly and carefully enough, too, but there was an alarming click.

Johnny wheeled about. He saw the boy, and he saw the bag in his hand. The tough stirred into life at once.

An angry cry escaped his lips, and he rushed in pursuit.

Reddy banged the door to in the pursuer's face, but he could not stay to lock it, even if the key had been on his side. He had only one way open to him, and that was to make use of every moment to flee.

Of course he wanted to reach the street, but he found that, instead of the straight way usual to city houses, the space was peculiarly divided and broken up. Crooks and turns were before him, and he could not pause to solve the tangle—unless he kept on rapidly the heavy hand of Chowder Johnny would be upon him—he could only run and trust to luck.

Grasping the bag tightly he did run, and with all possible speed. Through two doorways he went in succession, but the last attempt brought dismay. He was in a regular room, and he knew he was astray from his proper course. He looked back of him; Chowder Johnny was in hot pursuit.

Reddy tore open one more door. All was darkness beyond, but the part nearest to him showed that he was in a kind of store-room. Big boxes and boards were all about the place.

It was not inviting for one who wanted to reach the street, but he had to go there. He went.

Johnny reached the door and then paused. His marked prey had disappeared, but it did not appear to trouble him. Instead, his troubled face cleared.

"I've got you now," he remarked, confidently. "You can't pass out o' this hole, an' the sooner you give up, the better. See?"

Reddy said nothing. He had crawled in behind a huge box, and there he nestled down.

"No way out," repeated Johnny. "Will you give in?"

Reddy was silent. He gripped the bag and longed for chance to act once more. He did not see the chance, however, and he was worried even while doggedly determined to fight it out to the end.

Johnny continued to talk. He wanted to conquer without more trouble, and he used

arguments to that effect. His game did not appear, nor did he get an answer, and he finally became impatient.

"Keep et up, ef you will!" he snapped. "I'll fix ye!"

He fell back and closed and locked the door.

"R. Rush, you are in fer et!" muttered the boy. "Ef you don't slip yer cable right soon you will be set on. Git out!"

He left the box and tried to reconnoiter. This was not easy, for the closing of the door had shut off the last gleam of light, and when he moved he stumbled over boxes and boards.

"Wal, this is a pretty go!" he admitted. "Et takes a cold, calm nerve ter like this sit!"

He was still moving aimlessly when the door reopened. The gleam of a lamp dispelled the darkness somewhat, and Reddy used his eyes in a hurried attempt to see what was about him. He found that the room had no window, and no door except that where Johnny stood. He was penned in fully.

The tough held the light well up and looked around. He could not see the boy, but his expression was confident. He reccked the door, pocketed the key and started to search.

"I'll have you in a jiff!" he declared.

He peered behind one box after another, and gradually neared the boy. The latter decided that he would have to yield. He could not run, nor could he oppose his strength to Johnny's successfully. Since it must be so he decided to make his submission dramatic.

He rose behind the box.

"Here I be, boss!" he announced.

Johnny saw him, and his eyes gleamed.

"Aha!" he cried, "I've got ye!"

Just then the floor seemed to sink under Reddy. He dropped down. He disappeared from the view of the tough, and, when the latter pressed forward a little more, there was only a yawning gap in the floor. He was alone in the room. He stood dumfounded. He realized that he was looking at a trap of which the door had fallen, but he was amazed to see such a thing.

"He's gone!" cried Johnny, "an' the gold has gone with him!"

The Rusher certainly was gone, but not a great ways. He was quite as much amazed as his enemy when he fell. He had grasped wildly to try and get a hold somewhere, but had failed. He brought up with a shock, though not with force sufficient to injure him.

"A firm floor was under him, but where he was he did not know.

"Guess this is a well," he mused, "an' I shall drown or get smothered with foul air. Where's the water, an' where is the gas?"

He did not feel the one or smell the other, and he grew more hopeful. He felt wooden walls on two sides of him, and there was an open space elsewhere.

"I'll hustle on before Jack gits his claws onter me again."

He started, but suddenly paused.

"Say, where's that bag o' gold?" he exclaimed.

It was not in his hand, surely, and he went back as far as he could go and began to feel for it on the floor.

"I've lost it, by crickey! No sign o' the blamed thing here, an' I kin feel the whole floor. Now, that's pison! Where has the thing gone ter?"

Remembering that he had a match he struck it and used his eyes. The bag was not visible, and, surely, had not come down the trap with him as far as the floor.

"Hi!" suddenly yelled somebody above, "come up here, or I will graft a windin'-sheet onter ye!"

Reddy glanced up and beheld Chowder Johnny. The tough was peering down the

trap. The Rusher was not yet out of danger, but his audacity returned and a mocking smile came to his sharp face.

"Git a grip on yer cable afore ye go round the curve!" he tantalizingly advised. "Poke a nickel in the slot!"

"Come up here, or you'll git done up!" shouted Johnny.

"Oh! git yer shoes half soled; your feet show!"

With this sneering retort Reddy turned away. He did not fail to remember that if he had come down Johnny could do the same, and he had due respect for the ruffian's muscle, if not for his brains.

He had decided that the way was clear for retreat if he was not molested, and he went without delay.

At the end of the hall he found another door, and this yielded to his touch. Just as he unclosed it there was a heavy "thump" behind. He looked back; he saw Chowder Johnny. The tough had leaped down the trap, and was in pursuit.

"Look out!" he yelled. "I'm comin'! You sneakin' spy! I'll do ye up right quick. Hold on!"

CHAPTER X.

BAD FOR HEARTY JACK.

CHOWDER JOHNNY was enraged, and Reddy knew he would fare hard if the tough laid hold of him. He did not intend to be thus caught, and he hurriedly closed the door behind him, and scud for safety. It was all a matter of whether anybody got in his way, he believed, and for the time being the way was clear.

Johnny's steps sounded heavily in the rear, but it was soon over. The Rusher passed another door, and he was near the street. He ran out and stood on the sidewalk.

Once there, all of his audacity returned, and he paused to see if Dunn was coming. Johnny reached the door.

"Hi!" called out the boy. "Be you goin' my way? Ef so, jump on, fer the cable is runnin'. Take a brace, old man!"

The pursuer looked up the street. Then he weakened. No policeman was to be seen, but there were several other persons, and in the light of day he dared not follow and precipitate a conflict against a boy.

He shook his fist at Reddy and returned into the house.

"Acts as ef he was mad about somethin'," commented the Rusher, grimly. "I can't imagine w'ot et is. Hope I ain't said nothin' ter hurt his feelin's."

For awhile the boy indulged his exhilaration, and then he came down to business. He walked away, thinking carefully.

"How be I ter proceed next? The game is all in there, but I can't pick et alone. Shall I call in a cop? The game is there, as aforesaid, but et ain't ripe fer pickin'. 1 kinder hate ter spring the trap until all o' the victims is inter it. I guess I'll go ter Briggsy, an' see w'ot he says about it. I ain't got much faith in the opinion of a cop, no-how. They are too gallus."

With Briggs looming up as a signal light, Reddy set off. He went several blocks with springy steps, and then something else attracted his attention.

"Hearty Jack, by ginger!"

It was the sailor, but there was more than his face and form to keep the boy's attention. He saw something peculiar about the man from Australia.

"Crickey! he acts as ef he was bein' chased—"

Reddy stopped short. Hearty Jack dodged into the door of an undertaker's shop.

"Wal, that's cheerful, by gum! Wonder ef he's goin' ter order his own coffin, or—Hi! there goes a female woman, too!"

Certainly a well-dressed lady had abruptly gone the same way, though where she came from the Rusher could not say. The fact

that she went quickly after Jack was emphasized by the additional fact that she appeared to be excited about something, and Reddy was not proof against such an attraction.

He entered the undertaker's also.

The good citizen whose business it was to bury people had risen with cheerful attention, and was now awaiting orders, perhaps anticipating from the flood of customers, that there had been an accident of far-reaching nature.

Instead of having notice paid to him he saw Hearty Jack look around as if eager to find a hole out of which to dodge, while the lady marched straight up to him, her manner threatening and unfriendly.

"So I have found you!" she exclaimed.

"Ye-es," faltered Jack.

"Why did you run away from me?"

"I—I didn't know you."

"I believe you speak falsely."

"No, no, madam."

"You acted like it, but we will let it drop. Why haven't you been to see me?"

"I—I only got in this morning on a ship," muttered Jack.

"What a whopper!" commented Reddy, audibly, but the chief speakers were too much engrossed to hear him.

"Where have you left my child?" pursued the lady.

Reddy grew more interested.

"What's all this comin'?" he wondered.

"He—he is at a hotel," explained Jack.

"What hotel?"

"I don't know its name."

"How is that?"

"I left him there, and now I can't find my way back to it."

"It is as I suspected!" cried the lady.

"You have played me false, though for what reason I know not. My child! what have you done with it?" she imperiously added.

A more uncomfortable appearing person than Hearty Jack it would have been hard to find. He squirmed as to body, and his face worked strangely. All the while, too, his eyes wandered with that unprepossessing suggestion that he was looking for a hole to dodge through. He might be a bad man or he might not, but he was a badly frightened and very much distressed man.

The undertaker was shaking his head in displeasure at having such a scene in his shop, but Reddy pressed closer to the pair and wondered if the immediate future was going to bring him into the game. He suspected it would.

Hearty Jack was seen to retreat again, but was stopped by the wall, and the lady confronted him.

"Answer me!" she commanded.

"I—you—What did you say?" gasped Jack.

"Where is my child?"

"I don't know."

"How is that?"

"We missed the ship, and I lost him before we sailed from Australia."

"You just said he was in the city, at a hotel."

"I—I lied!"

"You left him in Australia, did you?"

"Yes."

"You are positive?"

"I regret to say, I am."

"Then why did a paper publish in the list of arrivals on the vessel by which you wrote you would come, but which reached New York well ahead of time, so that I missed it when it came—why did the list of arrivals say, among others, John Robbins and child, Hugo Westingly?"

"It must—it must have been a misprint."

The first anger of the lady had subsided, but, mixed with every evidence of grief, there was now a resolution in her manner which told of calm purpose not to be passed by lightly by Hearty Jack.

"Enough!" she exclaimed. "Your fictions grow too ridiculous to be endured. Give me no more of them. Where is Hugo?"

"I don't know, madam."

"Wal, I'm the nickel-in-the-slot-machine that does know!"

With this remark the Rusher pressed further forward and stood in front of the lady.

"You—you—Do you know?" she cried, with excited manner.

"I do, for a certainty; you can gamble on that."

"Where, oh! where is he?"

"Gobbled! Kidnapped by Jacky, here, the old humbug!"

"No, no; it is not true; I swear that it is not!" declared the sailor, with warmth.

"Then who did do it? Where does Israel come in? How about Chowder Johnny? Who put the kid under key? Jack, you jest open yer mouth wide an' sing yer highest octaves, or you will land in the Tombs. See? I'm onto you, you son of a sea-cook!"

This was not all intelligible to the lady, but she had heard enough to wish to know more.

"Boy," she continued, excitedly, "speak out at once. If you can tell where he is you shall be well paid."

"One jiff. Wot's the name o' that lost kid?"

"Hugo Westingly."

"I thought so. Hearty Jack, you villain, why do ye lie so like pison?" sternly demanded Reddy.

The sailor shook his head helplessly.

"Speak!" directed the lady. "What can you tell of the child?"

"Wal, he's been floatin' around a good bit—"

"Where is he now?"

"Shut up at Chowder Johnny's."

"Where?"

"At Chowder Johnny's—though, fer that matter, I guess Mayo Montgomery runs the roost, an' Johnny is only a passenger. Guess et must be Mayo's sneakin' hole."

"I don't know the persons you speak of, and all this is unintelligible to me. If the child is in trouble, who is responsible for it?"

"Ask Hearty Jack."

"No, no!" declared the sailor. "It was not my fault. Blame me if you must for my misfortunes, but do not claim too much villainy for me. Spare me in this!"

"Can you lead to where Hugo is?" asked the lady.

"Yes."

"Do so, then."

"Be you his friend?"

"I am his aunt—more, he is parentless, and I am his all. Lead the way!"

"Call a cop, first. Et means a scrap, sure as you live. See?"

CHAPTER XI.

REDDY ACTS AS CHAMPION.

THE lady looked a little startled.

"If a policeman is needed the child must be with desperate persons," she replied.

"So he is, mum!" asserted the Rusher.

"Men or women?"

"Both!"

"I do not like—"

She fell into thought for a moment, and then suddenly aroused.

"I will go alone and demand my child. They dare not refuse me. If, however, I am baffled, a policeman shall be called in. Lead the way at once."

"I will, an' I had jest as soon have the cop left out o' the game. It's like this—"

Reddy stopped short, and then added, abruptly:

"Hi, there! Hearty Jack has taken a skip!"

"Yes," added the undertaker, "and I want all of you to do the same. This is not a police-station nor a hall of oratory, by thunder."

"Let's go, mum," advised Reddy. "This

gallus galoot ain't got manners enough ter be polite to nobody but a corpse. Come on!"

"But Jack—where has he gone?"

"I reckon he is now goin' down the Bowery so fast you could play golf on his coat-tail."

The lady turned her gaze wonderingly upon Reddy for a moment. She found him a new creation to her, and he was not always intelligible at that, but she was impressed with the belief that he was honest, and that was the main point. She had moved toward the door, and when she discovered that Jack had gone out of sight she decided to let him drop wholly for the time. Again she urged the Rusher to lead the way to Hugo Westingly.

Reddy obeyed. He was anxious for another try at his own enemies, and just reckless enough to walk in on them with no companion but a woman. He believed she would keep them from doing him harm, and as for a policeman, the boy had not forgotten that he aspired to be a great detective, himself. If an older head than his came into the game he would be an inferior in the case.

He thought he had just as soon go alone with the lady.

It was not a long journey to the house, and it was presently in sight. Reddy surveyed it closely. Would they meet with a reception which would prove what he already suspected—that they were exceedingly rash?

The Rusher had been busy explaining, and his companion knew she had no pleasure trip ahead of her, but she was surprisingly calm.

Reddy rung the bell, and, after some delay, Mother Moll appeared.

"Mum," quoth the Rusher, "we've come from Israel Robbins, Esquire. We have a message for the kid."

"Wot kid?" apathetically asked Moll.

"Hugo."

"Gone!" calmly answered Moll.

"What?"

"Gone!"

"Now, see here!" exclaimed Reddy, "don't you go ter givin' us no lies. We ain't in the mood fer it. Trot out that kid or we will have the whole perleece force onter your back, by crickey!"

"Boy," replied Moll, with cool contempt, "go home ter your mother, an' let her spank you an' put you to bed."

"Ef I go ter bed et won't be in Sing Sing, like some people I know," retorted the Rusher.

"Be calm," urged the lady. "Madam, if you will produce the boy you have here I will pay you well for it."

She exhibited her purse, and Moll's dull eyes brightened for a moment, but the light was transient.

"Deary," she replied, "I wish I could earn it, but they have taken the boy away. Somebody—perhaps it was this boy—scared them, an' the other boy was hustled out o' the house right quick."

"Must have been," snapped Reddy, unbelievingly.

"All done in ten minutes. It didn't need no more. Mayo Montgomery had charge of it."

"What has he got ter do with this case?"

"He is in it for the money of it, I guess. Anyhow, he is helpin' them. He is an old hand at crookedness, an' he has plenty o' places where he can hide people. Won't you pay me fer tellin' you of this?"

The Rusher was all too much afraid that Moll was speaking the truth, but he did not admit it.

"Old gal," he pursued, "we will take a walk through your place an' see w'ct we kin find. See?"

"Come an' welcome. You will find et as I say—I wish et was otherwise. I would like," and Moll's eyes strayed to the purse, "to accommodate the sweet lady."

The tour of the premises was made, but it did no good. Even suspicious, alert Reddy was compelled to believe that Hugo had been spirited away. They talked with Moll, and were informed that after Reddy's escape, Chowder Johnny gave the alarm, and Mayo had promptly hurried Hugo off. Where he went Moll did not know. She was left alone by the gang, as Johnny accompanied Montgomery.

There was no help for it, and the investigators left the house. Moll was given a small sum for her aid, though not with Reddy's consent.

Once outside the Rusher broke forth earnestly:

"What next?"

"Alas! what can I do?"

"Find that kid."

"It seems impossible. I am baffled at every turn—"

"Mum, I am with ye now," reminded Reddy, throwing his head well up.

"Can you aid me further?"

"Sure! Jest you rest easy, an' we will snag that gang assure as mud. All we need is time."

"But we don't know where they are."

"We kin find out, an' don't you doubt et, I am a hustler from Gowanus Bay, mum, an' when I dig my toes iuter the pave the fire flies. But I don't know what all this is about. Jest loocyd, will ye?"

"My name is Mrs. Prentice. I lately had a married brother in Australia. He and his wife both died, and a son was left alone in the world. Of course, this was Hugo. I was his only relative, and, as he had nobody in Australia to care for him, arrangements were made for him to come here. Of course, I was very glad to have it so, for he was likely to be very dear to me as my brother's son."

"The kid is a corker!" declared Reddy, warmly.

"Now there was in Australia a sailor named John Robbins. My brother had done him some great service, and Robbins seemed very grateful. He volunteered to bring Hugo here, and it seemed a very good chance, indeed. I agreed to it. I knew when the vessel was due, but it reached New York so much ahead of time that my plan to meet it at the pier was fruitless. I missed it and I missed Hugo."

"I should remark."

"I had absolute proof that Robbins and Hugo arrived by the vessel, and I thought the child would be brought to me. He was not, and it finally dawned upon me that Robbins was playing me false. I have been looking for him, aided by the fact that I had once seen him before. To-day I caught sight of him, as you know."

"Yes."

Mrs. Prentice suddenly lost her calmness. "Why, why, has Robbins done this?" she cried, tremulously.

"Et is queer, by crickey!"

"I would not have believed him so bad."

"Maybe his trolley is twisted."

"What?"

"I mean, maybe he is crazy."

"That is possible. He acted very odd when I spoke to him."

"He acted ter me as if he was scared silly," replied Reddy, with bluff wisdom. "I guess the kink is in his soul, not his trolley. Say, do you know Israel Robbins?"

"Israel Robbins? No. Who is he?"

"A cousin of Jack Robbins's."

"I never heard of him."

"Nor the Mayo Montgomery who was mentioned at Mother Moll's?"

"No."

"I didn't know but et was some old grudge that was at the bottom of it."

"The whole matter is unexplainable to me."

"Blackmail, very likely."

"Then why don't I hear of it?"

"The time ain't ripe."

"Tell me what you mean by mentioning these other men."

It would have made a long story, if told in detail, but Reddy soon gave her an idea of the part that had been played by Israel and Mayo. Something impelled him to avoid mention of the bag of gold, and he said nothing about it.

"Poor Hugo has fallen into the hands of a gang of sharpers," exclaimed Mrs. Prentice. "It is all a scheme to do iniquity, though I know not just how."

"One thing we do know," cried Reddy, with animation, "we are goin' ter git onter the trail o' them crooks, an' we will do them up equal to a Fifth Avenue roast. Give us yer hand, mum; we will be pals in this, an' the pestiferous gang has gotter be licked like sixty. We'll do it!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRAIL GROWS WARM.

It was several hours later, and Reddy was seated in the hotel engaged in deep thought. It was about all he could do then. Israel Robbins had not been seen on the premises since morning, and where he was the Rusher did not know.

Now, Reddy was thinking. That meant a good deal. When Reddy meditated he threw his whole energy into it, and passing guests who were wont to jest with the ready-tongued son of the hotel keeper now received no reply.

"I'd like ter know," ran the current of his thoughts, "where that bag o' gold is. There must be about a million dollars inter et, an' that ain't no small sum, by crickey!"

The whole case was fascinating to the boy, but the gold took the strongest hold on him. Money is fascinating to anybody, but Reddy gave all his interest to this particular sort of money.

It was in "dust"—yellow, sand-like, uncoined dust—and it was all the more attractive because of that fact.

It glittered before his eyes all the time. It was to him a treasure of monumental nature—rich, strange, romantic, thrilling. Nothing in the shape of coin would have influenced him thus, but he saw coin often, and dust—never before. He wanted to see it again.

"When I fell down the trap," he mused, "I lost my grip on the bag. I hunted fer it afterwards, but it wa'n't on the floor. I'm dead sure it didn't fall on the floor above. Then, by crickey! it must have lodged somewhere as I tumbled, an' it's probably there now."

This current of thought could have but one result with such a person as Reddy, and he finally announced his decision.

"I'm goin' ter look fer that bag o' gold!"

He rose promptly. He had had his supper, and nothing remained to be done but to go. He started. Briggs, the night-clerk, saw him.

"Going out, Reddy?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"I want ter git onter a game o' marbles with Scrappy Syms. He beat me like thunder, the last time, an' I'll lay him out cold when we git at it again. Et was only luck before, Briggsy, he can't play fer rotten chestnuts. He's got a fish-bone in his swaller."

"How is that?"

"He ain't steady; he plays good sometimes, but his style is ginerally jerky. See?"

Briggs did not "see" fully, but, believing the pampered son of the house was off on a trivial errand, he let him go. The Rusher went.

"Hi, hi!" he chuckled, "that Briggsy is a good feller, but he is precious slow. He couldn't ketch flies."

Reaching the street the boy walked off rapidly. His course was toward the house

where he had met with his late adventures, and he reached that point in due time. He had banked everything on the probability that, in a house of that kind, the street door would not be kept locked, and with this hope in his mind he tried it. He was not disappointed.

The door answered readily to his touch.

It opened, and he saw a dark hall.

"That's the stuff!" he commented. "I don't see no obstruction—in fact, I don't see nothing but the dark."

With the recklessness of his peculiar nature he boldly entered.

Despite the darkness he was not at a loss to keep the right course, and by moving carefully he found the place where he had fallen in due time. He reached up as far as he could.

"Here's the trap," he murmured. "They ain't took away the hole in the floor."

Even then he found comfort in a little joke, but he did not let it delay him. He had brought along a very small dark lantern, and as this was lighted he had only to move the slide. He then saw the opening in the floor above. The door of the trap was closed, but this was just what he wanted.

He peered upward. The walls of the trap were rough and unfinished, with ends of lathes protruding here and there.

"I've got ter climb."

There was ample hold for his strong fingers and toes, and he began promptly, first thrusting the lantern into his pocket. When he had gone far enough the lantern was again pulled out and he commenced the search.

Carefully he peered into the recesses. He saw cobwebs, but nothing of the bag of gold. His hopes fell many degrees.

"Shoot the luck!"

He did not give it up at once, but when he had hunted a few minutes longer he had to admit that he was beaten. The bag was not there.

"Somebody has been ahead o' me an' swiped et. I s'pose Chowder Johnny was the pill that done it."

Suddenly he heard a small voice below him.

"Be you huntin' fer rats?"

Reddy started so violently that he nearly fell, but when he recovered his balance he looked downward. He saw a very small girl to match the voice.

"Be they squeakin'?" she added.

The Rusher was not too stupid to see that the innocence of the child had led her to look upon the whole matter with lack of suspicion, and he seized upon the chance.

"They ain't squeakin' now, but I seen the tail o' one big feller whiskin' out o' sight. He had a blue ribbon tied on his tail, an' must hev been a dude."

"Dear me! That is funny."

"Yes, so et was. Do you live here?"

"Yes. Don't you?"

"Why, sure. Did you find anything near here ter-day?"

"Was it a bag o' sand?"

"Yes, yes; that was it. Did you find et? Did you see et? Did you—"

"The sport took it awsy."

"What sport?"

"Deeny Logan. He came an' hunted fer it, an' then took it off."

"Bless me!" muttered Reddy, "what new crook has the trail took?"

"Was it your sand?" asked the girl.

"Yes."

"Then you go right to Deeny, an' make him give it up. I would!"

"Where kin I find him?"

"He belongs ter the hand-ball club over by Jakey's. You know where that is, don't ye?"

"I guess so; I know where one hand-ball club has its courts."

"You go there an' you will find him. He plays the game, an' they do say he is a

corker. He beat Timmy, the blacksmith, last week."

The Rusher had never become interested in the game of hand-ball, and did not know just how much of a feat it was to beat Timmy, the blacksmith, but the girl's manner indicated that Deeny Logan must have done himself great honor.

"How did he happen ter find the bag?" asked the Rusher.

"We children had it ter play with, but he come an' said he would give us a dollar fer it, as he wanted ter mix some mortar ter build a chimby with; an' Jimmy Costello, he sold it to him. I think it was mean. Jimmy swiped all the dollar, an' we kids lost the sand."

"Wal, here's a fifty-cent bit fer you. So-long!"

Reddy had descended from the trap, and he now moved quickly out of the house. If the girl's mother came she would not think so lightly of a strange boy on the premises.

"Who's this Deeny?" wondered the Rusher, as he walked off. "Kin it be he was sent by Mayo Montgomery? I wouldn't think Chowder Johnny would let him inter the game, but Johnny ain't likely ter know no sport like Deeny is said ter be. Anyhow, I'll jest look in on the hand-ball fellers. I reckon I am interested in the game."

It was not far to his destination. He was not at all sure he would be admitted, but he intended to try. He wanted to see Deeny.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BAG OF GOLD AGAIN.

REDDY reached the point aimed at and was pleased to find nobody on guard. He entered, and was in the midst of the festivities.

He saw a kind of bar-room which seemed to be doing a good business, and in front of it were numerous men who were drinking, smoking, talking and laughing loudly. Among them moved a fat German whom the Rusher believed to be the "Jakey" who kept the place.

Suddenly there was a rush to one side, accompanied by the announcement, "They are going to begin again!"

Reddy did not know what they were going to begin, but he went with the crowd, and, for the first time, saw a hand-ball court. Four athletic fellows began to play with vim, and the boy was interested for awhile, but he soon gave it up.

"Et ain't in it with base-ball!" he decided.

Then he thought of the players. He inquired their names, but none of them was the wanted Deeny. The Rusher did not dare to inquire for him direct, so he began to move around. He soon saw another door than that through which he had entered. Men were going up and down, and he finally decided to go too. He did so, and, reaching the upper floor, found himself in a region where several small rooms opened one out of the other. Tables and chairs were all around, and men were engaged in card-playing, and having what they regarded as a general good time.

"Regular club-rooms," murmured Reddy. "I wonder ef Deeny is here? I'm afraid I'm on a no-good trail."

The club-rooms were plainly of the free-and-easy pattern, and nobody accosted Reddy, or seemed to notice him. It was in his favor that three or four youths were present. The Rusher surveyed these other boys.

"Guess I shall have ter ask one o' them about Deeny. I hate ter do it, fer-Hello!"

His musings had been suddenly interrupted. His roving gaze became fixed, and his eyes expanded.

"Mayo Montgomery, by ginger!"

Mayo it was, surrounded by a group of other clubmen who were laughing and talking with him. The spy did not let grass grow under his feet, but moved close to the group. He gained position and listened.

"Come, Deeny," urged one of the party, "give us a show for our money. Try Pete a go."

"Not to-night," replied Mayo.

"I know you can do him up. If you don't, you will, at least, rub him sharp. He will know he has been in a horse-race when you are done with him."

"I am not dressed for it."

"Rats! Shake your silk dress and go in. You did up Tommy, the blacksmith, easy. Try Pete."

"Yes, go in, Deeny!" voiced the crowd.

Reddy had made a discovery. The sport might be Mayo Montgomery in public, but he was only Deeny Logan in private. More, the Rusher had, it seemed, found the man who had taken possession of the bag of gold.

"Crickey! I am onter his nibs now, an' I'll make him run all through the stretch. Wonder where he has hid the bag?"

It seemed foolish to suppose that the treasure was on Deeny's person, but Reddy unconsciously began to use his eyes to that end. Then he observed something which impressed him as peculiar. On one side of the sport's coat there was a decided protuberance.

On this spot the boy's eyes became glued. Something was in Mayo's pocket. What?

"See that hump?" murmured Reddy, absently.

If the Rusher had been one of the regular detectives he aimed to equal he would not have suspected any man under such conditions of carrying a bag of gold in his pocket, but Reddy was not a professional.

He believed he had found the location of the treasure.

"Crickey! don't I wish I could swipe that lump?" he muttered.

Mayo's friends were growing emphatic. They were rough-and-ready fellows to whom no joke was too harsh, and they finally grew tired of his refusals to play a game of hand-ball for their amusemen.

"I say, boys," cried one, "what's to be done with a bloke who won't be social? Deeny won't play. What shall we do?"

"Make him play!"

"Carry him to the alley!"

"He says he's dressed too stiff. Take off his gown!"

The last suggestion took well with all, and they pounced upon the sport with loud laughter but violent hands. While a part of them held him fast the rest stripped off his overcoat.

"Here!" he yelled, growing alarmed, it seemed, "none of that. Let me have my coat!"

For answer, one of his rough friends tossed the garment backward, perhaps thinking somebody would catch it. He was right; somebody did catch it. Reddy made a forward leap and caught the coat as it flew.

A fresh yell of rage escaped Mayo's lips. He had the best of reasons for not wanting to lose sight of the garment, and he did not intend to, either. Exerting all of his strength he tore himself loose from his friends and shot away to secure the coat.

Reddy had only one thought when he secured hold of it, and that was to get the "hump" which he had marked down as the bag of gold. He might have kept the one and dropped the other, but he did not think of that.

Holding to both he scud for the outer door.

If he had possessed a clear road he might have won in a gallop, but the first thing he did was to run forcibly into a man who accidentally got in his way. The shock nearly took him off his feet, and when he

recovered his balance much of valuable time had been lost.

Thus, when he finally found a clear way again, and ran toward the door, he found Mayo already in his path.

"Crickey! I'm in fer it!"

Reddy was rattled for a moment, but it was soon over. He could not go where he wanted to, so there was only one thing to do—go where he could.

Another open door furnished the means, and he shot through.

"Thief, thief!" bawled Mayo.

"Ginger! it's escape or perleece cell now," exclaimed the amateur detective. "I prefer to escape."

The prospect was not bright when he saw a flight of stairs ahead of him, but it was the one chance and he took it. He ran up with fleetness which left his pursuers in the rear for the time being.

At the head of the stairs he found an attic, but this was not in any degree a place of safety.

"No show fer restin' the sole o' my foot here!" he admitted after a quick glance around. "I must try it further."

"Further," meant up another flight of steps, but, this time, it was only a ladder, and he knew this would take him to the roof.

He dashed up the steps; he reached the top; he unfastened the hook of the scuttle; he shoved up the door and the way was open above. He crawled to the roof.

By that time the pursuers were in the attic, and he knew he must do something to check them. He held the scuttle half-way up and glared down at his foes.

"Keep away!" he shouted, "or there will be a vacant chair among your angels. Keep away!"

He was not obeyed. Mayo rushed up the steps, and Reddy did the only thing remaining for him to do. Just when the sport's head rose above the roof he dropped the door. It fell; it caught Mayo on the head, and he dropped down the steps.

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Reddy, "ef I've done him serious mischief I shall git salted. Ain't there any way out o' this?"

Clinging fast to the coat he ran forward to reconnoiter. Disappointment awaited him. The club-house building was of brick and had a flat roof, but those next to it were old, wooden affairs, and the roofs were sloping.

"I might jump," mused the adventurer, "but I guess I should land a deceased Rusher on the flaggin'. I don't like et, by gum!"

He hovered on the edge, coat in hand, uncertain what to do. There was a respite behind him, but he knew it would be only brief. He must escape quickly or not at all.

Again he surveyed the sloping roof before him.

"Desperate chance. Only an Injy rubber man could do et safely. I reckon I shall have ter—Hi!"

The scuttle was raised, and a head appeared above the roof he was on. His former work had given his enemies due respect for his prowess, and the new investigator was careful, but when he saw there was no danger, he leaped up fully.

"Come on!" he cried. "Here's the kid!"

Several other men followed him.

"Ketch the young villain!" ordered one.

They moved forward.

"Stop!" cried Reddy.

"Stop, is it?"

"That's jest w'ot it is."

"How will you stop us?"

"Maybe you think you kin stop me?"

"We do that."

"Maybe, too, you want this coat?"

"Yes."

"Wal, don't you try ter git it. Don't you come a step nearer. If you do I will jump off the roof an' take the coat with me. See?"

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT BECAME OF THE BAG OF GOLD.

THE Rusher's manner was such that the men paused. They believed he would keep his threat and leap, and they were not so much stirred up, but they considered what they believed would be the result.

"Don't get the fool in the head boy," cautioned one. "If you jump you will land dead on the ground below."

"Yes, an' you won't get the coat," retorted Reddy.

"Come here and give up—"

"Not much!"

"Don't be a fool!"

"Don't you get gay. I am runnin' this end o' the restaurant. Keep out o' the kitchen!"

Reddy's courage was rising, as he saw that they were not inclined to drive him to desperate courses, but the scene suddenly changed. A shout at the rear of the group was followed by the appearance of Mayo Montgomery, who did not seem much the worse for his recent fall.

"Why do you lose valuable time?" he snapped. "I will not delay here. Let the fool jump, if he will."

The sport dashed forward; and Reddy's resolution was made. Quickly he turned his back on the crowd and then disappeared from the roof.

"He's jumped."

"He has gone to sure death."

"That's the last of him."

"Skip, or we shall be witnessess to his death!"

Nobody was witness to what was happening to Reddy. He had taken the dangerous leap, and without one safeguard. Using what precautions he could, he dropped to the second roof. He touched it, and then shot down toward the back yard. He tried to slacken his speed all he could, and in a measure he was successful, but it appeared, even at that, as if the roof was greased and all prepared for his fall.

He reached the eaves.

There he hung for a moment, and his chance came to him. He saw the water-pipe connecting with the eaves trough, and he dropped the coat. He had just time to hang to the pipe and stay his fall.

Often he had swung from a like pipe for the fun of the thing—he now swung for his life. Getting a good grip he pointed his toes earthward and slid.

Electricity seemed to run through his hands, but he held fast and went bravely down. He reached the yard. He released his hold and stood on the earth.

"Crickey!" he exclaimed. "I guess I am still in the swim."

He was, and the coat was at his feet.

"I've got the prize—but w'ot ef the bag o' gold ain't inter it?"

He made a dive for the coat, ran his hand into the pocket and brought out a well-remembered thing.

"Hi! here's the gold, sure-pop! Jiminy! I reckon the Rusher ain't done up yet."

He could see one of the men at the edge of the roof of the brick house, but he did not delay to see more. Keeping close to the wall, so he could not be seen in return, he ran along.

"I wonder how I am ter git out o' this yard—Hello! luck is still with me."

This was, indeed, the case, for a gap was presented in the line of houses where one had been pulled down to make room for a new structure. An open space was now there, and Reddy hurried out to the street.

He had, of course, left the coat behind him, but the bag of gold remained, and he tucked it under his coat and hastened to get out of the vicinity. He was still excited after his adventure, but when he recovered a little a feeling of exultation took possession of him.

"I've got that bag of gold, by crickey!"

an' I'm goin' ter hang to it. Jiminy gracious! ain't this a snap!"

He was so exhilarated that he could hardly keep from shouting his joy. The bag of gold had taken full hold on his mind, and his young blood bounded like fire in his veins.

"Why, I'm as rich as all the Vanderbilts combined, I reckon. There must be a million of this stuff, I guess, an' that makes me the richest man in New York."

He paused to cut a pigeon-wing, much to the disgust of a patrolman who chanced to be near.

"Here!" growled the guardian of the night, "stop that monkey biz an' get along home. Your old man will lick the dust out o' you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Reddy, merrily, "you don't know how much dust I hev got, Mr. Copper."

He was not inclined to explain, and his nimble feet soon took him home. Avoiding the gaze of Clerk Briggs he mounted the stairs to his own room. Then he locked the door and sat down to look at his treasure.

He handled the dust and let the light shine on it, and chuckled and laughed in his glee. Never had he had such an experience before, and he gloried in his possession.

"A million, ef there is a cent!" he declared. "Why, I'll go ter see every baseball game that's played, next season, an' I'll give the New Yorks a five-dollar bit o' dust every time they lick the tripe out o' the other fellows. I'll bribe them so nobody else will be champs. I'll— But hold on—hold on!"

The Rusher had suddenly grown grave of expression.

"This gold ain't mine!"

He turned this melancholy fact over in his mind, and then added:

"I don't know whose it is, but I ain't got no right to it. Israel may hev bought et from Hearty Jack, or he may not; but it ain't mine. By crickey! I've got ter give up my dreams o' bliss—the stuff ain't mine, an' that settles it. No puddin' fer me!"

It was much to the credit of the boy that he was honest under such temptation, but even when hope fled he did not lose sight of the gold.

"I'll find out jest whose et is," he decided.

Another period of meditation, and then he tucked the bag again under his coat and went into the hall. To Israel Robbins's door he walked, and when he heard somebody stirring within he opened the door regardless of ceremony. Israel was there, but looking in anything but a happy frame of mind.

He stared at Reddy, saying nothing.

"Hullo, boss!" cheerfully began the Rusher.

"Hullo!" growled the man from Ulster county.

"How's biz?"

"Vile!"

"Things ain't comin' your way, eh?"

"No."

"Wal, I reckon you have recovered yer lost bag o' gold?"

"No, I have not!" cried Israel, angrily.

"No? Why, that's bad."

"Bad? It's villainous. I've slaved fer years keepin' city boarders in the summer, up home, an' saved up some money, an' now all is goin' wrong with me. First, my wife died last summer right when we had the boarders there—mighty inconsiderate of her—an' the fat was in the fire; but I got a housekeeper—"

Israel's gloom suddenly dissipated, and a smile stole over his face. He chuckled and added:

"Say, you orter see that housekeeper o' mine! She's a dandy! Why she ain't more than thirty years old, an' she's a corker! Pretty as a picture, and the way she can

stint them upstart boarders is jest good fer sore eyes. The more money they pay fer their keep, the more she would stint the table. It cost me forty-seven dollars ter bury my wife, but even at that I guess I made money by her dyin'; my new daisy saved so much. He, he! them city boarders was as poor in flesh as rails when they left us! He, he!"

"Mr. Robbins, you seem ter be a corker."

"I have been, but I shall never take no more pleasure in this world. That bag o' gold—oh! oh!" and Israel doubled up and twisted surprisingly. Reddy looked hard at him.

"Be you sick, boss? Shall I git some pain-curer fer you?"

"The pain is deeper than any drug kin go; it is of my heart. The gold; the bag o' gold!"

"Say, Uncle Sam, where did you git that dust?"

"Bought it of Jack Robbins."

"Sure?"

"Yes."

"Queer that a sailor should hev such stuff."

"Hearty Jack turned miner; that's how."

"An' you was presented with it by him?"

"No, no; I bought it, boy. Paid ten thousand dollars for it."

Reddy had tried to catch his companion, but he had not succeeded. Israel hung close to his original story.

"Kin you prove that it was a fair bargain? Kin you prove that the dust is yours?"

"I have proved it; I told you it was mine."

"Got any witnesses ter the sale?"

"Witnesses ain't necessary; my word is good in the case, an' my word is enough."

Reddy shook his head. Much as he disliked Israel, he would have handed the gold over if there had been proof; but, instead of furnishing such evidence, Robbins showed a disposition to dodge even a frank talk on the subject.

"Hedon't act like an honest gent," mused the Rusher, "an' he don't get no points enter me. I'll hang ter the dust!"

CHAPTER XV.

REDDY WATCHES FOR EVIDENCE.

THE Rusher did not consume much more time with Israel. Ending the interview in a way calculated to make the man from Ulster county think he had dropped in out of passing curiosity, the boy returned to his own room.

"No use ter chin with that Turk," he muttered, in disgust. "He is wedded ter his idols, Issy is; an' the idols are Hottentot hobos. He's a bad egg with a fringe o' blue vitriol on the edges. I won't bother with him, an' when I make my grand detective scoop he will get railroaded ter Sing Sing. That's Issy's size."

Reddy was all prepared to go to bed—all but placing his treasure for the night. Like all persons who have large sums of money, he now began to experience worry.

What was he to do with the bag of gold? Where would it be safe? How could he secure it from thieves?

He prowled around his room for a long time, trying to settle this question, but without arriving at any satisfactory decision, and he finally took it into bed with him.

"I reckon somebody will murder me for it before mornin'," he muttered, as he snuggled down. "I'll lay awake fer awhile an' see ef they come."

He did lie awake for awhile—just about ten minutes. Then our amateur detective slipped off to sleep in the fashion of boyhood. He slept all night in safety. When he woke it was day, and he looked around wonderingly.

"I'm alive, sure as you guns!"

Amazement over this fact kept him motionless for a moment, but he speedily made a dive for the bag of gold. That, too, was

secure, and his wonder grew. Where were the thieves he had expected? He did not see them in the room, and the vague notion that he might have killed a dozen or so of them in his sleep was dissipated by the fact that he found no bodies to prove it.

On the whole, he believed that the night must have been uneventful, and that no robbers had tried to get at him.

He rose; he had his breakfast; he left the hotel.

He had an appointment with Mrs. Prentice, and he kept it with fidelity in all ways. An exchange of notes showed that there was no news on either side, but the Rusher had left his treasure concealed in his room, and it lay heavily on his mind all the time.

It was the check to the happiness otherwise to be had.

"Wal, mum," he said, presently, "w'ot is the programme fer to-day?"

"I don't know. I wish you could advise me."

"You want ter find the kid, eh?"

"Poor Hugo! I do, indeed."

"I'll try fer et, mum, an' I may git there. I reckon the way is ter shadder Old Ulster."

"Why?"

"He will be goin' ter the hidin'-place."

"Do you think so?"

"Why, cert."

"Carry out your plan, if you think best."

"I will."

Reddy did it. Leaving Mrs. Prentice shortly after, he returned to the hotel. He was just too late to catch Israel, for the latter had put on his tall hat and long coat and gone out. Here was one check, and the irritation of the situation was added to by the fact that the man did not return until the middle of the afternoon.

"Guess I've clean lost my graft," soliloquized the Rusher, "but I will sorter hang ter Issy's coat-tails an' see w'ot will come of it."

Mr. Robbins sat in the main room for two hours, evidently doing some earnest thinking. Then he went out again. So did Reddy. Israel walked away to the west of the Bowery. So did Reddy.

"Uncle Sam, I'm after you like a case of small-pox. Weave on an' let me shake a foot on yer trail," directed the boy, as he carefully avoided attracting Robbins's attention.

The pursued man was not suspicious, and the chase was not difficult. Israel had some definite object, and he went along with a swinging stride for some time, but there was finally an abrupt change.

Israel darted across the street.

"Hi! there," cried Reddy, "w'ot is up?"

His feet and his gaze alike followed Israel.

"Crickey! there is Hearty Jack again! Robby is after him! Hi! now Jack sees him—he scoots! Wal, you're in fer it now!"

Jack was "in for it." He had tried to slip quietly away, but his course was not a happy one. He had tried to make use of an alley, but when it was too late he saw that a hand-cart was standing there, blocking the whole passage.

The sailor was cornered.

Israel had pursued him hotly, and Reddy, his wits working quickly, was not far behind. It occurred to the boy that there would be a talk in the alley, and if he could get to cover he could overhear it. He moved accordingly. He pursued sharply until he reached a doorway which opened from the alley, and then dodged into it and was secure from observation, and where he could listen to all.

The man from Ulster began warmly.

"I've got you now, you sneak!" he exclaimed.

Hearty Jack stood helpless and hopeless.

"I've been lookin' fer you, an' I've found you," pursued Israel.

"Yes."

"Yes? Is that the way for a man o'

brains ter speak? Why, you are like a clod!"

"I wish I was one!" muttered the sailor.

"Oh! do you? Wal, go an' get a pistol an' make yourself so."

"I may do so, yet."

"No danger. Men who talk that way always live to be a hundred. John Robbins, where is that bag of gold?"

"I don't know."

"You lie!"

Hearty Jack made a gesture of weak remonstrance and said nothing.

"I don't understand all the travels o' that gold," admitted Israel, "but you either stole it, last night, or had it stole."

"I know nothin' of it."

"Oh! come now, don't be foolish. You took it from Mayo's hands—I don't know that you know Mayo, but you took it. You sent in a boy to swipe it, an' then you got away with it, somehow. I don't know how. But you were in the game, for nobody else would think of it."

"I know nothin' of what you talk about."

"Don't you? Come off!"

"I tell the truth. I have not seen it since it was first lost."

"Humph! Do you think I will believe that?"

"I only know it is true."

"Bah!"

"If this man Mayo had it, why don't you go to him? Who is he? How came he by it?"

"Wal, you see he's a friend o' mine, an' a man give him the bag o' gold on the street—queer circumstance, but Mayo thinks he was pursued by officers, an' shook the dust for safety. The blamed business is making a pile o' trouble, anyhow."

"Israel Robbins, why don't you return that gold to its rightful owner? Why will you persist in so many lies? You say you bought it from me. That is false, as we well know—"

"Hush, hush!" cautioned Israel, looking around nervously.

"I am fast getting into a frame of mind where I am reckless enough to face the rod of terror you hold over me an' tell all I know—"

"Don't do that!" hastily cried Israel.

"I had just as soon."

"Do you want to go to prison?"

Hearty Jack bit savagely at his nails.

"I begin to think I don't care a rap. I am not a rascal, an' it don't come easy to me to see the innocent suffer as they are doin'."

"Jack, you are a fool!" declared Israel. "You just feather your own nest an' let outsiders look out for themselves."

"I am in a fine way of featherin' my nest when you threaten to send me to prison, and chase me as if I was a wild animal."

"Say, Jack, you just tell me where that gold is an' I will divide with you—"

"Never!" cried the sailor. "I do not know what has become of it—your suspicions are wholly wrong—but if I did know I would not aid you to commit this wrong, even if you could offer me all the wealth in New York. I am unfortunate, but I am not the villain you would make me!"

Jack's voice rung out clearly and his eyes flashed as he uttered these manly words. Reddy Rusher could hardly avoid a shout of admiring approval, but just then there was a turn of the tide.

A man pushed past Reddy and stood near the others.

It was Mayo Montgomery.

"Robbins!" exclaimed the sport, "you want to do this cur up at once. I'll help! Wade in, now!"

Evidently the gentleman of flashy look did not approve of delay, for without more ado, he rushed at Hearty Jack.

"I'll smash you!" he declared.

It was a headlong attack, but the sailor

had been in many a fight, and he quickly threw himself into position. He aimed a swinging blow and took Mayo neatly on the jaw, but it fell a little short and the crook was still in the ring.

He knew how to use his own fists, and he threw up his hands with the skill of an old campaigner. He and Jack began to exchange blows with fierce rapidity.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RUSHER CLOSES IN.

REDDY was a little dazed by this new turn of affairs.

"By crickey!" he exclaimed, "I guess a policeman is needed here!"

Acting on this sudden notion he ran to the entrance to the alley and looked up and down the block, but no blue-coat was in sight. In fact, chance had made the whole region singularly deserted by all but the one party.

He looked at them again, and saw that Hearty Jack and Mayo, well matched in science, were having a lively fight, while Israel, wholly lacking in science but full of venom, was hanging on the outskirts and seeking for a chance to strike Jack a cowardly blow.

"Jiminy crickets! I guess there is room fer me there!" added Reddy, his soul swelling with indignation.

He ran forward and leaped like a cat upon Israel's back.

"I'm in this scrap, you p'ison snake!" he cried.

Israel knew it. His neck was closely encircled, and the boy was shutting off his breath. He could not see his assailant enough to recognize him, but he did know it was a boy who had seized him.

"Leave me be!" he howled, shaking Reddy as a dog would a cat.

"Not fer Susan!" retorted the Rusher.

"I'll hit you a clip, you brat!"

"W'ot will I be doin' then?"

"Get off my back!"

"You get off the earth!"

Reddy was laughing gleefully, but it was not at all funny for the man from Ulster. He pranced around wildly, but the small object on his back stuck like a burr.

"Balance yer pardners!" sung out the Rusher. "Have a ginoine old Ulster-country dance, Issy!"

They were having a dance, but not in a way to Robbins's liking. It was the old story of a small antagonist who could not be got at, and he struggled in vain. Reddy was there, and he stayed.

In the meanwhile Jack and Mayo were having it hot and heavy, but all things have an end. Jack had been stirred out of his moody self into an alert fighter, and he had been watching for a certain chance. It came, and he caught Mayo a blow under the chin which absolutely lifted the sport and sent him flying through the air.

He would have fallen to the flagging, if there had not been a softer place awaiting him.

His head took Israel Robbins full in the stomach, and the result was that the countryman, Mayo and Reddy all went down in a heap, with Israel at the bottom.

The Rusher was not less quick-witted than usual, and he squirmed out of the tangle readily, but Mayo came up slowly and Israel lay gasping like a landed fish.

The blow in his stomach had literally taken all his breath away.

He gasped and writhed until he seemed likely to die of the blow, but nature assumed sway at last and he found his wind and his voice.

"Murder, murder!" he groaned.

"Who is dead?" asked Reddy, laughing gleefully.

"My stomach, my stomach!"

"Does it ache? Better have it pulled."

"I am a dead man."

"Not much; though you may yet be a dead rascal. No man about you!" scoffed the Rusher.

Mayo was up and nursing his hurts. He had seen enough of Jack and his system of fighting, and all the sport wanted was to get away. He caught Israel and pulled him to his feet. The sailor was standing inactive, and all this was hopeful for Mayo's plans.

"Get out of here!" he exclaimed to Israel.

"We've got a bit ter say about that," put in Reddy. "Drop on them again, Jackey. You lick them while I go fer a cop."

"I want no part of them," answered Jack.

"But we kin stop their monkey biz now—"

"No."

"Let me call a perleeceman—"

"Not fer the world; let them go!" hastily responded the sailor.

Reddy's face fell. He had planned on ending the career in crime of the precious pair, and it was a fall in his desires. He was not allowed time to think further on the subject; Mayo was all awake to the possibility of such trouble, and he caught Israel and pulled him out of the alley. The Ulster Countyite went willingly, and with a slight lessening of the pain in his stomach.

"Say, do you see that?" cried Reddy.

"What?" asked Jack.

"They have skipped."

"Yes."

"Yes? You say it cool."

"I don't know that I am ambitious to have them stay here an' hammer me."

Reddy gave up the plan defiantly and came closer to the sailor.

"Say," he added, earnestly, "be you a rascal or an honest man?"

Jack's gaze fell.

"I try ter be honest."

"Then how kin you eat out o' the same dish with Is. Robbins an' that waxed-mustache dude?"

"If you imagine I am in with them you make a big mistake. Didn't you see them fight me, just now?"

"Yes, but you was chummy with Ulster a little while ago."

"Never!" declared the sailor. "We have been together, but not because I wished it. Israel sought my company, though not as a friend. He was my bitter enemy."

"John, where is Hugo Westingly?"

The sailor started. He made no reply, and the Rusher continued:

"John, that kid is bein' hunted fer by his friends. You brought him over from Australia, an' then you deserted him—"

"No, no!"

"Then how was it?"

"That scoundrel, Israel Robbins took him away from me."

"Why did you let him go?"

Again Hearty Jack was silent.

"Come, John, speak out!"

"I can say nothin'."

"John, the taker is as bad as the thief."

"Boy, I am not the scoundrel you think me. I am unfortunate, and the hand of Israel Robbins is on my throat."

"Put your hand on his throat!" swiftly advised the Rusher.

"Wisely said, but I am helpless."

"Why?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Where is Hugo?"

"I do not know. Poor child! I would give anything to see him restored to his friends. It is shameful—it is infamous that he is thus used."

"What has Israel against him?"

"Nothing."

"Then why is all this buckin' ag'in him?"

"I cannot explain. Boy, I am a most unfortunate man, an' at the mercy of the same wretch who is abusin' the child. Mercy!"

bitterly added Jack. "It is a word of which Israel knows nothin'!"

Reddy was silent. He saw the uselessness of seeking to get more out of his companion, and he could not feel hard against Jack. In every way the sailor showed that he was full of regret at the situation. He meditated for awhile, and then pursued:

"Mister, that kid is in a darned bad fix, an' if you kin help him I wish you would—"

"I only wish I could!" cried Jack. "But I can't; I can't!"

It was the last real effort on Reddy's part, but he talked with the sailor until the latter gave his present address and promised to give his aid if such a thing became possible.

"It may ruin me," he announced, "but I will take the chances."

Jack was anxious to get away, and he did not delay longer. Reddy allowed him to depart, and then hastened to Mrs. Prentice with the latest news. Naturally, she was eager to see the sailor, herself, and she set out for his address.

The Rusher did not go with her. The impression was strong in his mind that there could be gains made if he was on the alert, and he started on a general trip to try and locate either Israel or Mayo.

He did not happen on them, but he did the next best thing—he ran upon Chowder Johnny. The tough was striding along the street, and too much occupied to notice Reddy.

The latter was more observing, and he fell in behind Johnny and followed briskly.

"Ef the Dunn gang is still in possession o' Hugo I'm goin' ter hev that kid out o' limbo!" he thought, resolutely.

Several blocks had been made when a coach passed him and drew up in front of a house. Johnny, too, paused, and then addressed some words to the driver that Reddy did not hear.

"All right," replied the driver.

Johnny entered the house.

The Rusher acted on an impulse and walked up to the driver.

"Goin' ter take somebody away from here?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Costs money ter know that," laughed the driver. "I am mum."

CHAPTER XVII.

REDDY'S FINE STRATEGY.

THE Rusher pulled a dollar out of his pocket.

"Here's the money!" he exclaimed. "Now, tell me."

The driver looked first at the dollar, and then at Reddy.

"Why, boy, I wouldn't take your cash," he answered, good naturedly. "If you care to know, it's a party I am to take. Two horses—see?—big load. Two men and a boy says the order. Cab wouldn't do."

Reddy's eyes brightened.

"Mister Man, be you honest?" Reddy asked.

"I claim to be."

"Ef you will drive that load where I say I'll give you ten dollars now, an' you kin help the law. Is it a go?"

"Say, what's up?"

"That kid is a captured kid, an' enemies are hot ter ruin him. It may be they will kill him. Be you willin' ter be party ter sech a deed?"

"Not much! I have a kid o' my own at home, an' I wouldn't do harm to anybody else's boy for all of New York."

"Bully fer you, old man! Now, take that party ter my father's hotel an' you will save one kid from great damage. Is it a go?"

The driver was not ready to answer on such scant testimony, but he was prepos-

sessed by Reddy's looks and manner, and he asked questions in rapid succession. He received replies to all, and the result was that an understanding was reached. The driver knew what was required of him and why it was asked.

This done, Reddy rushed off and went to a telephone office.

He asked for his father's hotel, and soon had communication with that point. He opened up briskly.

"Hello, hello!"

"Hello!" was the faint answer.

"Is that you, Briggsy?"

"Yes."

"I am Rush, junior. Say, Briggsy, git two policemen an' have them wait until I come."

"What—what's that?" quoth Briggs, over the wire, evidently rather stunned.

"I hev a scheme ter nab Israel an' Mayo in their crookedness. I am goin' ter bring them in a cab, an' there will be a fight. The hotel will all be wrecked ef you don't do as I say. Will you get the cops?"

"Reddy, you are jokin'—"

"Say, Briggsy, did I ever git gay?"

"No, but—"

"Then you mind! Will you have the cops?"

"Yes, but I want you to explain—"

"Can't stop. Git them cops or there will be murder done. Murder, Briggsy: put that in yer pipe! Good-by!"

Reddy shut off and hung up the transmitter. This done, he paid his bill and rushed out of the office. He looked up the street.

"Jest in time!" he exclaimed.

The coach was coming. A plan had been laid for him to ride, and he did his part nobly. The driver barely slackened his speed, and the Rusher mounted to the box.

"You're a cuckoo!" declared the driver.

"Nimble as a goat. I'll bet a dollar my fares ain't the least idee my load has been added to. I pulled my blanket around so as ter prevent their lookin' up this way much."

"Boss, is your orders the same?"

"Thirty-fourth street ferry? Yes. They think they are on their way ter Long Island, I reckon, but they don't know we have planned ter stop at your hotel on the way. Lucky it is right on our line."

Reddy was not inclined to let his voice be heard much, but he had a few questions to ask.

"Have you got the kid?"

"Yes."

"An' two men?"

"Yes."

"Describe them!"

It was done, and Reddy was sure that Israel, Mayo and Hugo were in the coach. He could not help being a little nervous. He had played a bold and novel game, but there was a possibility that it would fail. Thus far the kidnappers were unsuspicious. If they woke up, or Briggs did not keep his contract, they were liable to miss their dramatic denouement.

The driver kept his horses going briskly, and they finally reached the Bowery. The "fares" had lowered the window curtains, and all was quiet in their quarter.

"Will it work?" was Reddy's constant interrogatory, of himself.

They neared the hotel. The Rusher looked eagerly. He could not see any policemen; he could not see Briggs. He seemed to have no friend on the watch.

"Kin et be that Briggsy has played me false?" muttered Reddy.

"Is that the place?" inquired the driver.

"Yes. Pull up at the door."

The direction was obeyed, and Reddy leaped to the sidewalk.

Just then the door of the hotel opened.

Briggs and two policemen came out.

The Rusher grew exultant. His face beamed. He could hardly repress a yell of

triumph. He leveled an unwavering hand at the coach door and fixed a firm glance on the blue-coats.

"Officers, there is your prey!" he announced, with dignity. "Ef you let them escape you will lose the biggest rascals in New York. Watch both sides; don't let them get clear."

The window-curtain of the cab was suddenly raised. The face of Israel Robbins appeared. He looked; he saw where they were; his expression became alarmed.

"Drive on!" he sharply commanded.

"Help, help!"

It was a small, shrill voice from the coach, and it simplified matters a good deal. Briggs had been looking wholly uncertain what to do, and not sure that Reddy was acting wisely; but the whole case was altered by the cry.

"Help, help!" repeated the small voice. "Save me; save me!"

Hugo struggled into view.

"Destruction!" cried Mayo Montgomery, from the coach. "Silence the kid or the jig is up!"

The policemen had been doubtful and skeptical, but they were so no longer. They pressed closer to the coach and one of them held up a warning hand to the inmates.

"No row here," he cautioned. "You are our prisoners, and resistance will only make a bad case worse. Yield!"

Israel Robbins dropped back in the coach, his face paling with cowardly fear. Mayo was a villain, but he was no craven.

"What's this?" he blustered. "What do you mean by stopping gentlemen when they—"

"Help, help!" repeated Hugo, feverishly. "These men are stealing me. Help!"

"Done up!"

With this brief comment Mayo gave up the game. He turned to the further side of the coach and leaped out. He hoped to find a clear road on that side. He did not find it; Reddy had been awake to all possibilities. He was there, and he leaped cat-like upon the back of the crook. There he hung like a young giant.

"Come in out o' the wet!" he cried.

Mayo struggled furiously, but the driver hastened to Reddy's aid and the crook was helpless. One of the policemen gave his assistance, too, and the last hope of the law-breaker fled.

Not yet did anybody but the Rusher know what was the meaning of the trouble, but the others knew enough to act wisely and rapidly. Both Mayo and Israel were taken into custody.

Hugo was lifted to the sidewalk.

"All of you," directed one of the officers, "will now go to the station and explain—"

"Hugo, Hugo!"

The former speaker was interrupted by an earnest cry, and as Reddy turned he saw the small boy clasped in Mrs. Prentice's arms. Near her was Hearty Jack.

"Hi!" cried the Rusher, "have you got in under the umbrella, old man?"

"I have resolved to tell the truth," answered Jack, "though it send me to the cell of a prison."

For a time speech was too rapid and excited to be coherent, but Briggs suggested that all go to the hotel, and they went. Mayo and Israel were helpless in the hands of their captors. Mrs. Prentice embraced Hugo again and again.

"What is the meaning of all this?" demanded Briggs.

"That man," quickly replied Jack, pointing to Israel, "has been the cause of it all. I came to this country, my old home, as the guardian for the time of Hugo Westingly. Israel met me, and forced me to give the boy up. He frightened me into it. Two years ago I committed a crime here when full of the devil's drink, whisky. I killed, or badly injured one Morgan Petts. I

thought it had blown over, and I ventured to come here, risky though it was."

He paused, glanced at the officers and added:

"I am confessing all, and you can do with me as you will. I expect Sing Sing. When Israel threatened me with prison, knowing all as he did, he scared me. It was dread of prison that has made me act as I did. I am not a villain at heart."

"But, why has Israel done his part?" inquired Briggs.

"That is easily explained. Hugo's father was a miner, and he left his son a quantity of gold-dust, the value of which was fixed at ten thousand dollars. Nobody here knew of this gold, but I brought it safely, intending to hand it over to Hugo here. It was this gold that made Israel sell his soul—it is this gold that has made all the trouble."

"Did Israel buy it of you, as he said?"

"No, no; never! He stole it from me, but it was stolen from him—"

Israel lifted his head for a moment.

"Stolen by Chowder Johnny—may my curse light on the traitor. I learned this very hour that he it was who took it."

"Where is the gold now?"

"Nobody knows."

"Stop yer cable-car!" coolly directed Reddy. "Ef I don't produce that dust in five minutes I am a 4-11-44 liar!"

With this he fled up the stairs. All waited for him, and Mrs. Prentice continued to caress her nephew, but Reddy did not exceed his limit. He returned, bearing the famous bag of gold!

"Here is the Jim-hickey!" he announced. "I've sorter been keepin' of it, but my custody is done, Hugo, old chappy, here is yer yellor sand. I don't want it; all I want is ter be a great detective."

"By Jove! I guess you have done it!" exclaimed one of the policemen, admiration in every tone. "If I catch onto this, you are a corker!"

"Oh! I didn't do much," modestly returned Reddy. "It was easy fer a professional like me. Now, gents and ladies, le's we all go inter Pop Rush's dinin'-room an' have a fed on quail on toast. I'll pay the bill fer all but them measly crooks."

"Let nobody think of eating or drinking until yonder scoundrels are lodged in prison!" urged Mrs. Prentice.

Israel suddenly roused to life and pointed to Mayo Montgomery.

"He was at the bottom of it all!" cried the Ulster county man. "He planned it all. Yes, an' he urged me on to do it, so he could get a share."

Mayo fixed a look of contempt on his ally in evil-doing.

"Coward!" was his sole comment.

"I guess all is clear now," cheerfully commented the Rusher. "Israel learned that a bag of gold had been brought here by Jack. He told Mayo, an' Mayo tempted him, an' he fell. They bulldozed Jack, and he didn't dare kick; but Chowder Johnny stole the gold on the sly, an' a general hunt has been on fer it. All is lovely now, and Hugo has ten thousand in cold gold. Hearty Jack, ef you are ter be done up fer assaultin' that Morgan Petts, I am sorry."

"He need not fear," quickly replied a policeman. "Petts recovered from his wound, and is now in Sing Sing, on a long sentence. There is nobody to molest Jack, here, and as he seems to deserve well, I reckon all of us may as well keep mum."

"We will!" declared Reddy. "I like Jack; he's a good one! Hugo looks kindly at him, too. Call the hunt off, with damage ter nobody but Mayo, Israel and Chowder Johnny. I guess they are likely ter git hurted some."

Reddy proved to be a good prophet. Israel, Mayo and Chowder Johnny were put on trial, and all received due sentences to

prison. Robbins was a coward when on trial, but his craven ways saved him in no degree. He was given a long term. The three men are companions in Sing Sing.

Hearty Jack was forgiven by everybody, and went to sea again a happy man at his good luck and escape from the clutches of the city buzzards.

Mrs. Prentice and Hugo, now re-united to stay so, were duly grateful to Reddy the Rusher, but the Bell-boy was cool and philosophical in the midst of his renown, as became a true Vidocq.

"Oh! it wasn't so very much ter do," he asserted. "You see, I am a detective, an' it comes natural ter me ter gobble sech crooks. They belong in Sing Sing, an' I give them a ticket home. Ef you need any more help, jest call on Reddy Rusher—that's me!"

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